

# Extraordinary Relationship-Marriage Self-Evaluation

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## Introduction

Welcome to this journey of self-exploration into how to have an extraordinary marriage-relationship. Here are the 12 key areas to explore with your partner. The purpose of this process is to engage in open, honest discussion for discovering what areas you want to improve in your relationship. The ultimate goal is to deepen your level of love and closeness. First, you and partner should each complete the self-evaluation independently and then sit together to discuss and share differences as well as similarities in perception about each of these relationship areas.

The ratings you make with your partner will be subjective—this is not a “scientific test” for normative comparison to other couples, it is meant only to promote the necessary open dialogue to stimulate new ideas to enhance your relationship. Here is a summary of the four vital areas that you will explore with the goal of having an extraordinary relationship:

- (1.) *The Four Types of Closeness*
- (2.) *Communication Effectiveness*
- (3.) *Managing Conflict*
- (4.) *Positive Love-Building Skills*

**Instructions:** Please rate how well you and your partner function in each of these key relationship areas using the “Rating Guide” below. Each area often has multiple aspects to it, so please just give an overall “average” rating for the area and make liberal written comments regarding specifics within it needing improvement. Also please make notes about what new actions you might want to take to help achieve your vision for an extraordinary relationship. Then sit with your partner and start an open discussion. Brainstorm to decide which areas you want to make improvements in and what you will do to make it happen. See Dr. McCarthy’s book for detailed specific action steps, tools, and love deepening practices for how to make transformations in each of these areas.

**Note:** Couples with very severe problems who are unable to communicate without conflict even over minor issues should not attempt to engage in sharing their self-evaluations of the relationship with one another without the assistance of a marriage counselor.

## Rating Guide

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N	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
Not	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Outstanding
Observed					

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**Rating*****Four Types of Relationship Closeness*****1. Conversational Intimacy:** \_\_\_\_\_

Taking time every day for a minimum of 5-10 minutes (preferably more) to talk about your day and to also have other conversations about family, friends, current events, or other interesting tidbits of information. Part of this time is ideally one-to-one with full attention but it may also need to be “in motion” when busy doing other things (for example cooking, taking care of kids. etc.).

Comments:

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**2. Shared Activities/Interests:** \_\_\_\_\_

Engaging in shared interests/activities frequently throughout the course of the week. This may include watching favorite TV shows together, going for walks, date nights, etc. For parents with kids it includes all the shared activities involved in raising the children together as a team and developing the kids.

Comments:

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**3. Physical Affection (Non-Sexual):** \_\_\_\_\_

Nurturing the relationship with frequent physical touch and affection. This includes not just the expected goodbye and returning home kiss but other physical touch such as holding hands, putting your arm around your partner, snuggling, etc. Most important, the form of physical affection should be in the way one's partner desires it according to their unique expressed love needs.

Comments:

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**4. Sexual intimacy:** \_\_\_\_\_

Taking time for a loving, mutually satisfying sexual relationship. This means that the needs of each partner and any differences between you have been openly discussed. Both seek to mutually understand one another's sexual and emotional needs for closeness that may need to be fulfilled for a satisfying sexual relationship. Both explore and recognize differences that may need to be respected.

Comments:

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## *Communication Effectiveness*

**5. Listening Skill:** \_\_\_\_\_

Pay attention and suspend one's own personal bias; have good eye contact while being fully present and focused on your partner speaking to you and not try to "fix" the problem (common problem for men). Comments:

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**6. Empathy:** \_\_\_\_\_

Ability to truly listen to the feelings of one another and help each other feel understood and appreciated for what one is going through.

Comments:

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**7. Nondefensiveness:** \_\_\_\_\_

The ability to remain nondefensive during difficult or conflictual conversations; refraining from too quickly becoming angry, upset, or emotionally reactive.

Comments:

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**8. Non-Interrupting:** \_\_\_\_\_

Allowing one another to speak without interrupting, especially in stressful or challenging conversations.

Comments:

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## *Managing Conflict*

**9. Remaining Calm in Conflict:** \_\_\_\_\_

Staying calm, making the effort to both talk respectfully and de-escalate from angry interactions.

Comments:

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**10. Avoiding Verbally Aggressive Voice Tone and Words** \_\_\_\_\_

Making conscious efforts to avoid accusatory, blaming, sarcastic, or verbally aggressive voice tone, as well as inflammatory language during conflict situations.

Comments:

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**11. Refraining From Negative Generalizations/Assumptions** \_\_\_\_\_

Being careful to avoid making negative generalizations—*you always, you never*—or make assumptions about malicious intent—*you were trying to hurt me*—during difficult or conflictual conversations.

Comments:

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## *Love-Building Skills*

### 12. Giving Positives and Appreciation: \_\_\_\_\_

Giving complements and appreciation to each other: you look beautiful/handsome today, that's a nice shirt/blouse you're wearing, thank you for cooking the dinner, cleaning the house, etc. Research shows the most successful marriages have a higher frequency of positives to negatives (ratio of 5:1).

Comments:

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### 13. Random Acts of Kindness \_\_\_\_\_

Going out of your way to do some small kindness or something special for each other (back or foot rub, offer to cook dinner/cleanup, etc.).

Comments:

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### 14. Love Affirmations: \_\_\_\_\_

Going beyond the simple *I love you* by taking the time to make a more profound expression of how you feel about each other—*I'm so happy that I married you; I love the wonderful talks we have; I really am so happy sharing my life with you!*

Comments:

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## **Improvement Plan:**

Please look over all of your above ratings/comments and indicate the areas that are, in your opinion, of greatest, most critical importance to improving your relationship. Please be as specific and as detailed as possible. In other words, what are the highest priority areas in need of development for achieving your vision for an extraordinary relationship? After identifying these areas, make note of them in the space below. Then begin the

process of designing your plan for how to make your desired changes (see Dr. McCarthy's book for a menu of new skills, tools, and action steps to help you each of these areas).