



# LOVE MAPS

By *The Gottman Institute*

## THE RESEARCH

Dr. John Gottman has spent over 40 years studying marital stability through direct scientific observations of more than 3,000 couples. His research has provided him with valuable insight into what makes relationships succeed and fail. In fact, after sitting down with a couple for as little as 15 minutes, he can predict whether or not that couple will divorce with over 90% accuracy!

Together with his wife Dr. Julie Gottman, Dr. John Gottman developed the Sound Relationship House Theory of successful relationships based on his breakthrough research findings. He considers this to be more rewarding than his divorce prediction model because it provides couples with scientifically proven tools to strengthen and divorce-proof their marriage.

## BUILDING LOVE MAPS

Do you know what kind of salad dressing your partner likes? Do you know what their biggest stressor is right now? Is religion important to them? What are some of their deepest fears?

These are examples of details you may or may not know about your partner, and they're stored in what Dr. Gottman calls your Love Maps. Enhancing your Love Maps is the first level of the Sound Relationship House, and Dr. Gottman uses this term to describe the part of your brain where you keep all the relevant information about your partner's life. Emotionally intelligent couples remember all the major events in each other's history, and continuously update their information as the facts and feelings of their spouse's would change.

Knowing your partner not only deepens your bond, but also prepares you better for stressful events and conflict. In one study, Dr. Gottman found that after the birth of the first baby, 67% of couples experiences a decline in marital satisfaction, while the other 33% did not experience this decline. In fact, half of these couples saw an improvement in their marriage.

What caused the difference in satisfaction between these two groups? Love Maps. The couples whose marriages thrived after the birth had a deep understanding of each other's worlds. The couples who didn't start off with a deep knowledge about each other were thrown off course when they faced a dramatic shift in their lives.

Detailed Love Maps protected couples in the wake of this dramatic upheaval. Because husband and wife were already in the habit of keeping up to date and were intently aware of what each other was feeling and thinking, their marriage remained stable. But if couple don't start off with a deep knowledge and understanding of each other, it's easy for a marriage to lose its way when lives shift so suddenly and dramatically.

Having a baby is just one life event that can cause couples to fall apart if they don't have a detailed Love Map. Any major change - such as the loss of a job, an illness, or retirement - can have the same effect on your relationship. This is why it's crucial to keep up to date on your partner's Love Map. The more you know and understand about each other, the easier it is to stay connected when life swirls around you.

## **WHY CAN'T WE BE FRIENDS?**

Enhancing your Love Maps is really just about building your friendship on an intimate level. Research shows that the determining factor in whether wives and husbands feel satisfied with the sex, romance, and passion in their marriage is, by 70%, the quality of the couple's friendship. So get to know each other! Ask your partner about their day and remember the little things about them. In times of conflict and despair, it will be your intimate friendship that strengthens your relationship.

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## **THE LOVE MAPS 20 QUESTIONS GAME**

Now that you understand the importance of building Love Maps, and have assessed the quality of you and your partner's current Love Maps, play a fun, light-hearted game with your partner. The more you play, the more you'll learn about the Love Maps concept and how to apply it to your relationship.

Step 1: Both you and your partner take a piece of paper, and with a pen, write down twenty numbers between 1 and 60.

Step 2: On the next page 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 a point. If your partner responds 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.

## THE LOVE MAPS QUESTIONS

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.

1. Name two of my closest friends (2)
2. What is my favorite musical group, composer, 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 website? (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 relax? (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 dream 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)
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 dream 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 people I most admire. (4)
49. Name my favorite ice cream flavor. (2)
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?
53. Name one of my 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 teams is my favorite? (2)

## ASKING OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Now that you understand the concept of Love Maps, we will provide you with a list of open-ended questions to ask your partner. These are questions that can't be answered with a quick "yes" or "no." You and your partner will take turns being the speaker and the listener. After your partner answers your question, follow up with an open-ended question of your own, then answer the original question you asked your partner. Then your partner asks you an open-ended question, and so on. These questions take longer to answer, so you don't have to answer all of them in one sitting. This will be an enlightening way to build your love maps over time.

1. How would you like your life to be different three years from now?
2. Do you see your work changing in the future? How?
3. What is your opinion of your physical home? Would you make changes if you could?
4. How do you think your life would be different if you lived 100 years ago?
5. How would you compare yourself as a mother (father) to your own mother (father)?
6. What kind of person do you think our child(ren) will become? Any fears? Hopes?
7. How are you feeling about your jobs these days?
8. If you could redo a five-year period of your life, which would you choose?
9. How are you feeling right now about being a parent?
10. If you could change one thing in your past, what would it be?
11. What is the most exciting thing happening in your life right now?
12. If you could instantly possess three skills, what would they be?
13. When it comes to the future, what do you worry about the most?
14. Who do you consider your best friends or allies? Has that list changed recently?
15. What qualities do you value most highly in friends right now?
16. What were the best and worst things that happened to you when you were a teen?
17. If you could live in another time in history, when would you choose and why?
18. If you could choose a different career or vocation, what would it be, and why?
19. What is the one thing you would most like to change about your personality? Why?
20. Do you feel like certain things are missing from your life? What are they?
21. Do you think you've changed in the last year? How so?
22. If you could design the perfect home for us, what would it be like?
23. If you could live another person's life, whose would you choose?
24. Have any of your life goals recently changed?
25. What are some of your life dreams now?
26. What are your goals for us as a family?
27. What goals do you have just for yourself right now?
28. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?
29. What have been the highlights and low points of the last year for you?
30. What adventures would you like to have in your life right now?

All of the above 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 think of questions to ask your partner; the key to sustaining a happy marriage is to periodically ask what's going on in their life.

For all of their power, 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. There are six other levels of the Sound Relationship House that are key to a happy relationship, including nurturing fondness and admiration, turning towards each other, letting your partner influence you, solving your solvable problems, overcoming gridlock, and creating shared meaning. You can read about the Sound Relationship House [here](#).

## THE GOTTMAN INSTITUTE

At The Gottman Institute, it is our mission to reach out to families in order to help create and maintain greater love and health in relationships. We are committed to an ongoing program of research that increases the understanding of relationships and adds to the development of interventions that have been carefully evaluated.

If you're interested in learning more about how you can apply our research-based tools to your relationship, we urge you to consider attending [The Art and Science of Love](#) couples workshop with your partner. The workshop is designed for couples of all ages, ability or sexual orientation, and it produces positive results for 86% of those who attend.

Click below to follow us on social media for more research-based tips to make love last!

