

DUCKLQWS

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Relationships with the Family

Your relationship with your partner's parents and family may be one of the most significant relationships in your married life. It is important at the outset of your marriage and in the first years of your marriage to understand these relationships and what blessings and difficulties may be ahead for you and your spouse.

1. List a few character traits or attributes about your partner's parents that you really like. Why do you like these attributes?
2. What kind of involvement do you expect and / or want from your in-laws and their family? Do you like over-involvement (closeness) more than under-involvement (distance) as a general rule (or visa versa)?
3. How do you feel about your spouse's relationship with his / her parents?
4. What kind of relationship do you think you have with your in-laws? What kind of relationship do you want?
5. Do you look at your in-laws as mostly a help or a hindrance in your upcoming or current marriage?
6. What would the marriage of the wife's (or bride) father with the husband's (or groom) mother be like?
7. What would the marriage of the wife's mother with the husband's father be like?
8. If you wish, write a personal letter or card to your in-laws (or future in-laws) with some of the reflections from this section. What do you want to say to them? What kind of a response would you expect?
9. Do you expect that you will do #8 above?

Giving and Receiving Love

Anybody who has been in an intimate relationship (whether romantic or between parent and child or just as a best friend) will know that people express and receive love in differing ways. One part of a dyad might be a real “touch-er” while the other is a problem-solver – and both are offering these attributes for the good of the relationship.

1. If there are five different dialects of the one language (love), what is your primary dialect?
 - Words of affirmation, appreciation or encouragement
 - Acts of service
 - Quality time spent together
 - Physical touch
 - Giving and receiving gifts
2. How do you feel about public expressions of affection? Are there any important “rules” about our public displays of affection that I should know?
3. How do you like best to express love for your partner? Provide several specific examples. How does your partner express love for you? Provide a few examples.
4. In what ways do you receive love the best? In what ways does your partner receive love the best?
5. How did your parents give and receive love? How about your grandparents or others that were around when you were growing up?
6. When you were a child, how did you imagine that you would give and receive love when you grew up to be an adult?
7. Describe the impact on how you love your partner by the way in which your family expressed love.
8. What impact do you think your partner’s family experience will have on how he or she will show affection towards you?
9. Take some time to write your partner a short note or letter about what you have learned from this section. Be a bit innovative in your creation!

Personal Communication

There are probably more books written on personal communication in marriage than any other subject (sexual affection may be a close second). Many newly married couples believe that they were communicating effectively during their engagement and early months of marriage. They find that they have been able to plan their wedding, determine where to live, and establish who will do what during the first few months. After several months of marriage they may find that there are a lot more decisions and details to work through than had been anticipated. Therefore, learning to communicate effectively with one another can eliminate many of the stresses that might otherwise arise.

1. How would you like your partner to tell you and show you that you are appreciated?
2. What is the best thing about your present communication?
3. What is most aggravating about your present communication?
4. How would you prefer your partner to request changes in some of the things that you do or say?
5. When do you feel listened to by your partner (mark as many as apply)?
 - Lets me talk without interruption.
 - Agrees with what I am saying.
 - Lets me say anything I want (within okay limits).
 - Smiles at me when I talk.
 - Faces me squarely and looks into my eyes (this can be hard when you are driving)
 - Doesn't get angry with me or reactive to me.
 - Lets me do what is important to me.
 - Asks questions and makes comments.
 - Changes his / her mind to understand me.
 - Puts away busyness (the TV or web surfing, etc.) to focus in.

- Tries to identify with my feelings.
 - Values my opinion more than our friends or family.
 - Other: _____
 - Other: _____
 - Other: _____
6. Some things my future partner does which make it difficult to share myself with him/her are:
 7. Some things my future partner does which make it easy to share with him/her are:
 8. One aspect of our relationship I've been reluctant to discuss with my partner and wish to now is:
 9. The way I usually resolve conflict is by:
 10. The way my partner usually resolves conflict is by:
 11. How do you anticipate forgiveness operating within your marriage? Is forgiveness easy for you to offer? Is offer forgiveness to someone who has hurt you difficult for you?

Conflicting, Fighting and Being Hurt

This section of the inventory focuses on one aspect of communication — conflict. The importance of this review is to help you identify some of the causes of being hurt and the feelings you experience in fighting or being hurt. But before you get busy, here is our bias on this – we think that conflict is normal (that is, it happens in even the best relationships) and that it can motivate you to change and grow. Hence, conflict is not all bad.

1. When I have been hurt by something my partner has said or done, I (mark as many as apply):
 - Withdraw from my partner
 - Do something to hurt him/her
 - Get angry at him/her
 - Play the martyr
 - Pretend everything is fine
 - Drop hints
 - Get in a “mood” or pout
 - Wait till he/she initiates forgiveness
2. The reason I respond like this is (mark as many as apply):
 - To clear the air
 - To get my partner to listen
 - Because we're too different
 - Making up is so nice
 - The pressure piles up
 - I want attention
 - We can't agree
 - I want something very much
 - I have a short temper
 - He/she starts it
 - Nothing else works
3. I am most hurt by my partner when he/she (mark as many as apply):

- Pays more attention to work than me
 - Puts another relationship first
 - Is careless about money
 - Doesn't keep up his / her appearance
 - Embarrasses me publicly
 - Does all the talking
 - Leaves everything up to me
 - Doesn't listen to me
 - Goes out too much with friends
 - Doesn't give me any space/peace
 - Says "no" to sexual advances
4. How would you describe your way of handling conflict? How would you describe your partner's way of handling conflict? How would you describe your parents' way of handling conflict?
5. The worst things about our disagreements are (mark as many as apply):
- Name calling
 - Physical violence
 - Never finishing
 - Hard to apologise
 - Bringing up the past
 - I always lose
 - They're so frequent
 - They last too long
 - We never solve the problem
 - They are vengeful
 - My feelings are hurt
6. "Fighting fairly" is (please define what you think it is):
7. When there was fighting in your family of origin (the family you grew up in), you would (describe what you would do):
8. The key to handling conflict in marriage is (this is your opinion):

Our Sexual Relationship

Some couples feel pretty "tender" about discussing their current and future sexual relationship. Our experience is that couples about to be married do more than they say and know a lot less than what they imply; and for newly married couples, that they are working (sometimes effectively, sometimes not) at figuring out what works best for them.

1. What is your favorite part of your body? Do you feel comfortable in your own skin?
2. Assuming that you are anticipating your first sexual experience with your spouse, what are some of your thoughts, hopes, satisfactions and fears regarding your sexual life in your marriage (upcoming or current)?
3. How do you think that the sexual needs of husband and wife may be different in your marriage (don't worry about all men or all women)?
4. How do you imagine that your wants and needs will be met within your marriage? Be as specific as you like.
5. How do you imagine that you will handle your unmet sexual needs and wants?
6. What have you decided regarding birth control?

Weekly Experience Record

Life for everybody is difficult sometimes. The following chart gives you the opportunity of talking about "when it gets bad." On the following chart, show where you feel each of you fit in terms of the item mentioned. Write your first initial in the cell whether the descriptor is rare for you, moderate for you, frequent for you. Do the same for your partner using his / her initial.

Weekly Experience

| Weekly Experience Record | Rarely | Moderately | Frequently |
|----------------------------------|--------|------------|------------|
| Anger, irritability, frustration | | | |
| Anxiety, worry, fear, dread | | | |
| Guilt, self-condemnation | | | |
| Hopelessness, despair | | | |
| Loneliness, isolation, cut-off | | | |
| Helplessness, weak | | | |
| Self-pity, "poor me" | | | |
| Inferiority, worthlessness | | | |
| Avoiding responsibility | | | |
| Undisciplined, procrastinating | | | |
| Attacking, defending | | | |
| Withdrawing, quitting | | | |
| Abusing alcohol or drugs | | | |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|
| Overeating | | | |
| Smoking | | | |
| Sexual frustrations, upsets | | | |
| Complying to pressure | | | |
| Financial worries, fears | | | |
| Inability to achieve | | | |
| Other: | | | |

Go back and indicate by a (X) where you think your partner would put you on each of the experiences.

1. The above chart can provoke a pretty emotional experience. Write 5 words or phrases that generally describes your experience right now as you are completing this inventory.
2. Do the same for your partner, imagining what he/she is experiencing.
3. Take some notes (below) about how you will handle the emotional experiences when things go bad with your spouse. Try not to be too idealistic. Give your best attempt at being realistic.
4. Describe any experiences you have had with counsellors (or others) where you might have talked about your emotions and habits.
5. How do you think lifestyle habits are changed?
6. How do you think habits as a couple are changed?

Interests I / We Have

Friendship is a natural basis for marriage. Here we intend to explore both your combined and separate interests, believing that both are important in your relationship.

1. Please list at least five interests or activities that you and your partner share. How frequently would you engage in this activity?

Daily - Weekly - Monthly - Less Frequently (List Activity or Interest)

1.1. D - W - M - LF _____

1.2. D - W - M - LF _____

1.3. D - W - M - LF _____

1.4. D - W - M - LF _____

1.5." D - W - M - LF _____

2. Please list at least five interests or activities that one of you hold but the other does not. Please identify if you or your partner hold this. How frequently is it engaged in?

Daily - Weekly - Monthly - Less Frequently (List Activity or Interest)

2.1. D - W - M - LF _____

2.2. D - W - M - LF _____

2.3. D - W - M - LF _____

2.4. D - W - M - LF _____

2.5. D - W - M - LF _____

3. Prioritise, from the following items, your marital priorities (#1 being most important, #10 being least important).

_____ Enjoyment and relaxation as a couple or as a family

_____ Community involvement, active in society

_____ Marriage, in enrichment, problem solving, couple dialogue, etc.

_____ Self, in personal growth, relaxation, sports, etc.

_____ Relationship to God in prayer, worship, church involvement

_____ Sexual satisfaction and freedom in marriage

_____ Getting ahead financially and "making it"

_____ Work, vocation or studies

_____ Developing meaningful friendships

_____ Children and their development

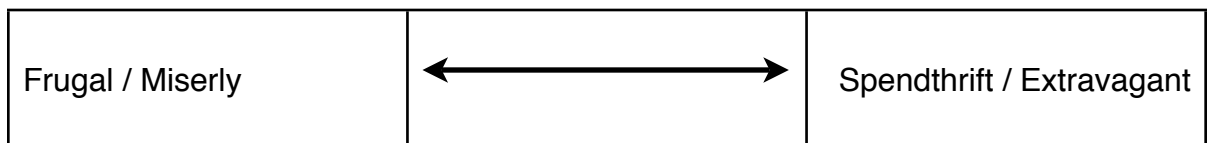
4. Is there one or more shared or separate interest that might result in conflict or tension in your relationship?
5. Why might this be a source of tension?
6. Do your hobbies involve others that are not acceptable to your spouse?

Money and Vocational Expectations

Money and financial planning can cause great stress in marital relationships. According to some research, it is a consistently difficult area for the newly married couple and one of the major problems throughout the marital history. Money habits in the first few years of marriage can carry on throughout the marriage history.

1. Who will manage the financial affairs of your family? Who “should” be the money manager? Why is this so?
2. I should be able to make a purchase of \$ _____ without first having to discuss it with my spouse. Does your partner agree?
3. Estimate your combined annual after tax income: _____. How much would you allocate, on an annual basis, to the following?
 - Rent, mortgage
 - Groceries, household items
 - Household operating expenses (including internet, cable, etc.)
 - Clothes
 - Appliances, furniture, major home items
 - Automotive (insurance, gas, maintenance) and / or transportation
 - Entertainment (including videos, movies, fun food, etc.)
 - Recreation (skiing, biking, golfing, etc.)
 - Insurance (medical, tenant, life, etc.)
 - Tithing or giving to a church
 - Holidays
 - Gifts (Christmas, birthday, anniversaries)
 - Cell phone, gym pass or other lifestyle expenses
 - Other giving
 - Savings
 - Loan repayment
 - Job enrichment
 - Other: _____
 - Other: _____


4. Suppose after you are married you suffer a significant financial setback. What areas would you be willing to cut back in (list your major 3 or 4)?
5. Assume you both are employed outside the home because you need two incomes to make ends meet. Then you are laid off and there is no work available in your field in that city. What would you do?
 - Move?
 - Go back to school and retrain?
 - Reduce your standard of living?
 - Take any job?
 - Other: _____
 - Other: _____
6. What are your thoughts on an individual who is trained in a vocation or profession, wanting to change to a new career, which entails several years of schooling?
7. How do you feel about the wife / mother (or husband / father) working outside the home after you have children?
8. What do you think about the husband / father working outside the home after you have children?
9. How important is owning your own home or apartment?
10. When you define "home" do you think of a house, a townhouse, an apartment, a summer home, etc.?
11. When you purchase your next car as a couple, how do you plan to pay for it? Who decides on what kind of a car you purchase? How do you make such a decision? Is a CD player and a sunroof more important than having 4 doors and a big trunk?
12. How would you describe yourself in terms of spending habits?




13. How would you describe your spouse in terms of spending habits?

| | | |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Frugal / Miserly |  | Spendthrift / Extravagant |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|

14. How would you like to be in terms of your spending habits?

| | | |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Frugal / Miserly |  | Spendthrift / Extravagant |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|

15. Describe your relationship together —

| | | |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Frugal / Miserly |  | Spendthrift / Extravagant |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|

16. Do you have a will? (When are you planning to draw up a will? You are planning, aren't you?)

Children and Expectations

1. Describe some of your best memories as being a child? Would you think of your childhood as “happy”?
2. Do you plan to have children? If so, how many kids would you like to have?
3. If you could not have kids how would you handle that (or how have you handled that)?
4. If you plan to have kids, when would you like to have your first, and what do you figure is the best spacing between children?
5. In one sentence, say what having your own child would mean to you
6. Describe how having children would affect your marriage (or has affected your marriage).
7. What do you think your 5 best assets as a parent are / would be:
8. What do you think your spouse's 5 best assets as a parent are / would be:
9. What do you think your several liabilities as a parent are / would be:
10. What do you think your spouse's several liabilities as a parent are / would be:
11. What changes do you want to make from the way in which your own parents' raised you?
12. How do you imagine your parents will be towards their grandchildren?
13. How will you invite / restrict your parents with your children?
14. Describe what you think your style as co-parents would be (or is).

Our Spiritual Relationship

1. Do you believe in a Supreme Being? Briefly describe your personal relationship.
2. How would you describe your spiritual life:

| | | |
|------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|
| Very important / vital | Depends | Not my thing / not interested |
|------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|

3. How would you describe your spiritual life together as a couple:

| | | |
|------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|
| Very important / vital | Depends | Not my thing / not interested |
|------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|

4. Do you feel spiritually equal to your partner? Are you intimidated in any way by your partner's spirituality?
5. What does it mean to you to be "spiritually one"?
6. Are you planning to incorporate personal and family devotional time?
7. What does "spiritual headship" mean to you?
8. What will you do to help or encourage your partner to grow spiritually? How do you think you might be a hindrance to your partner spiritually?
9. What do you think is the best way your partner can help you grow spiritually?
10. Are you planning on participating as a couple in a spiritual community or church?
11. Take a minute and write a prayer for yourself, your partner or your marriage.

For Those Previously Married

Some couples who come to us for premarital / marital mentoring have been married or lived common law prior to this marriage arrangement. There are some particular issues that these couples will need to face. These questions are intended to assist you in talking about some of these issues.

1. Economic

- 1.1. What do you know about your partner's financial situation; including debts, assets, alimony payments, child support and child care expenses?
- 1.2. What will your partner bring from his / her previous household arrangements in terms of furnishings and possessions? How does this affect your feelings of "theirs" and "ours"?

2. Legal

- 2.1. What has your partner organised in terms of insurance and will?
- 2.2. What legal obligations (financial, other) does your spouse bring into the marriage?

3. Co-Parental

- 3.1. How does your partner cope with interactions with his / her "ex"?
Your ex? And your former spouse's family - on both sides?
- 3.2. What plans do you have regarding legal guardianship, adoption of stepchildren, and / or conception of new children in your marriage?
- 3.3. What do you know about the personality and behaviour of your partner's children?
- 3.4. How will you integrate them into your new life together? What will your role be with your spouse's children (i.e. discipline)?

4. Emotional

- 4.1. What sorts of feelings did your partner go through when his / her previous relationship dissolved? Which ones were hardest to cope with? How does your partner cope with these now?
- 4.2. What are the unresolved issues in your previous marriage?
- 4.3. What is your area of fault in your previous marriage?

- 4.4. How did your partner cope with being single? What has he/she gained/lost in terms of personal identity as a result of being single? What will he/she gain/lose by entering this new marriage?
- 4.5. How is this relationship different than your previous one?

5. Sexual

- 5.1. Have you talked with your spouse about your previous sexual relationship(s).

For Those Marrying Cross-Culturally

Every marriage is a cross-cultural experience because each person comes from a family that has its own culture — its own way to doing everything from celebrating holidays to settling disagreements. When the premarital couple comes from different identifiable cultural or ethnic groupings, extra care needs to be taken to understand how diverse ways of thinking, speaking, and behaving (i.e. culture) affect assumptions and values about marriage.

Many people approaching marriage are not aware of how their own culture and family values shape their marital expectations. Neither are they aware of the extent to which a spouse's different cultural background will make the adjustment to couple-hood more complex. The following questionnaire is meant to help a cross-cultural couple become aware of the issues they face.

1. Cultural Profile

1.1. What "traditional" beliefs or values or ideals exist in your culture concerning marriage and family?

1.2. How would you describe your culture on the following continuum:

| | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------|------------------------------------------------|
| Collectivistic -- loyalty to family primarily | Depends | Individualistic -- personal well-being primary |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------|------------------------------------------------|

1.3. How did this value (as 1.2 above) express itself in your family?

1.4. What was the normal practice in your culture with regard to —

- Changing or retaining one's name when getting married?
- Who is expected to adapt the most in marriage (e.g. Is the woman expected to enter into the man's life and into his family and thus adapt more than the man)?
- Who was the “actual” leader in your family?

1.5. Marriage roles — how would you describe the structure of marriage and family from your cultural background?

| | | |
|--------------|---------|-------------|
| Hierarchical | Depends | Egalitarian |
|--------------|---------|-------------|

1.6. How did this value (as in 1.5 above) express itself in your family?

- 1.7. How was a sense of harmony and well being (i.e. where mutual well-being was valued most) experienced in your family?

| | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------------|
| With the extended family / when we were "all there" | Depends | In privacy / as a couple or individuals |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------------|

- 1.8. How would you describe the role of your extended family (grandparents, cousins, etc.) in your culture?

- 1.9. How was this cultural role value (1.8 above) expressed in your family?

2. Family Profile

- 2.1." Profile your family in terms of where you "fit" in your culture:

- Socio-economic status
- Level of education
- Language ability
- Rural or urban background
- Religious commitments and practice

- 2.2. What family holidays or traditions are celebrated? What is expected of you at these family times? What role would be exercised by grandparents, parents, children? Discuss the importance of loyalty to the family in your answers.

- 2.3. How were disagreements settled?

- 2.4. Who cared for the children's emotional needs? Who was responsible for discipline?

- 2.5. Who held authority?

- 2.6. Discuss the impact of religious practice on any of the above.

3. Communication Profile

- 3.1. What would the following gestures mean in your culture and family —

- Eye contact
- Avoiding eye contact
- Smiling
- Crying
- Talking about personal feelings

- Silence

3.2. What topics are considered taboo in family, among couples?

3.3. In decision-making is it important to consult your family? If so, give an example.

3.4. Are conflicts resolved with or without family input?

4. Couple Profile

4.1. What is "assumed" to be the meaning and purpose of marriage in your culture? In your family?

4.2. Is socializing in your culture normally done as a couple or individually?

4.3. Is closeness and intimacy valued or not valued in marriage in your culture? What about personal fulfillment as a by-product of marriage?

4.4. What do you notice about the ways of thinking, acting, and speaking in your partner's culture that are different from your culture?

4.5. Seeking out marriage counselling in your culture would be a sign of . . .

5. Sexual Profile

5.1. What are the sexual standards in your culture and in your family re:

- Virginity
- Promiscuity
- Keeping a mistress
- Pornography
- Privacy
- Double standards
- Other:

5.2. What sexual standards did your family follow?