The 10 Most Important Words In Any Loving Relationship

1. Trust
2. Intimacy
3. Communication
4. Commitment
5. Love
6. Friendship
7. Patience
8. Humor
9. Flexibility
10. Forgiveness

Gregory J. P. Godek

Love
Think about this

Walt is a junior in college. He has had a lot of dates, but has never had a “real serious” intimate relationship with a member of the opposite sex. Walt has many close friends and is very active in school activities. He likes to ski, play tennis, watch Woody Allen movies, and listen to jazz. Walt would like to become a lawyer and is majoring in political science.

Sarah is a sophomore in college and has dated the same person since her junior year in high school. Sarah was a cheerleader and her boyfriend was captain of his football team. They seem to be “made” for each other. They had the same friends, went to dances together, and studied together. Sarah does not seem to have any other friends since she was always with her boyfriend. Sarah also seems to be depressed. There seems to be something missing in her life, but she is not sure what it is. Presently, Sarah’s boyfriend is attending college in another state. She misses him, so she writes and calls him often.

Sarah would like to become a judge, so she is in a pre-law program with emphasis in history. She likes to play tennis and racquetball, water ski, and listen to jazz. Her boyfriend likes to play and watch football. Sarah only watches football if her boyfriend is playing. He likes ice hockey and plays basketball with the boys. He enjoys going to rock concerts. Her boyfriend is majoring in computer science. When Sarah and her boyfriend get together they are very active and busy, but they do not seem to really talk.

It’s the first day of a new term and classes are just beginning. Walt walks into his European History class and sits down and notices an attractive female sitting three chairs away. It so happens that the attractive female is Sarah. Walt says to himself, “I would like to get to know her. Just looking at her makes my heart beat faster.” Now the dilemma, how does he get to know her and what are the chances of him developing a close intimate relationship with her, especially since she already has a boyfriend?

We will continue following the development of this relationship throughout this chapter.

The Development of a Relationship

Relationships evolve, they do not just happen. They take time and effort. The first step in a relationship is becoming aware of the other person—first impressions. At this time we evaluate the person, using our past experience, prejudices, and stereotyping to make a judgment about whether or not to take the next step. Walt is impressed with Sarah’s physical appearance—he perceives her as being attractive. Remember, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, not all people would perceive her as beautiful. Now that Walt has become aware of Sarah, he needs to decide how he is going to take the next step, that is making contact, or getting acquainted with her. This is a difficult step for many individuals.

What would you recommend for Walt to do in order to get to know Sarah? The mere exposure phenomenon may work in this situation (Wood et al. 2007). The more familiar we are with someone or something, the greater the chance of liking them. The more Sarah sees Walt, the greater the chance of her interacting with him and liking him. Walt could improve his odds of making contact with Sarah by sitting in the chair next to her (proximity) or by making sure that he stands near the door everyday so she has to pass by him to enter the classroom (exposure). Do not be too aggressive in this process or you may threaten the other person. During the first week or so, Walt may not even want to say anything—do not make it too obvious.
The third step is disclosure. As we become friends, we are more willing to disclose more about our personal lives—our hopes, dreams, and fears. As we begin to disclose information about ourselves, we are demonstrating to our partner that we trust them and they in turn will disclose to us. Thus, the relationship will become stronger and more intimate. As Walt begins to open up slowly to Sarah, and Sarah to Walt, the relationship will begin to develop. Walt could begin by asking Sarah questions about European History, then talk about school-related subjects, ask about her hobbies and interests, and tell her about his interests. As they continue disclosing information about themselves to each other, their interest in one another will continue to grow.

Do all the terms and concepts mentioned so far sound familiar? They should; we discussed all of them thoroughly in chapter one. This was a review of how a relationship develops over a period of time, and now we will discover how the relationship will continue to evolve into a more intimate relationship.

**Becoming Friends**

Friends play a very significant role in our lives. Throughout our life they are important to us. They may provide help in a time of need, praise in times of achievement, sympathy in a time of sorrow, support in a time of failure, and advice in a time of confusion. Without friends we are lonely. Friends provide us with the emotional support and social ties that are vital to our well being. A good friend will always be there when they are needed. We can rely on their support no matter what happens to us. They also provide us with a feeling of belonging and a feeling that we are part of a group. We need an identity, and our friends help us in the development of finding who we are. Good friends satisfy these needs.

Who do you consider your good friends? A good friend could be a family member, a boyfriend or girlfriend, a spouse, a work colleague, a teacher, a clergyman, a fellow member of a religious, social, recreational, or political group, or any other person. Remember, the more “good” friends you have, the more secure you will be. Research continues to suggest that having close relationships helps people adjust to stressful situations and buffers people from the ill effects of negative life events like: accidents, divorce, loss of a loved one, or family problems, etc. (Myers 2008).

Can men and women be friends? Researchers tell us that men and women can be friends. However, do we really believe them? A survey of more than 1,450 members of the Match.com dating site revealed that we are an optimistic bunch (Chatterjee 2001). See Consider this.

**WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF A GOOD FRIEND?** A recent student poll at Tarrant County College asked, “What values do you think are important in a friendship?” Here are a few of their responses:

- Trust, someone you can share a problem with. Someone who will be there for you and will know you’re going to be there for them.

Who are your good friends?
Consider this . . .

Can Men and Women Be Friends?

A survey of more than 1,450 members of the match.com dating site revealed the following:

1. Do you believe men and women can be platonic friends?
   - Yes: 83%
   - No: 11%
   - Unsure: 6%

2. Have you had a platonic friendship that crossed the line and became romantic or sexual?
   - Yes: 62%
   - No: 36%
   - Unsure: 2%

3. Who is more likely to misinterpret the intimacy of friendship for sexual desire?
   - Men: 64%
   - Women: 25%
   - Unsure: 11%

4. Is it possible to fall in love with someone who first enters your life as a friend?
   - Yes: 97%
   - No: 4%
   - Unsure: 2%

5. Do you hope that when you do fall in love, your partner will have started out as your friend?
   - Yes: 71%
   - No: 9%
   - Unsure: 20%

6. Who is better at keeping sex out of a platonic relationship?
   - Men: 13%
   - Women: 67%
   - Unsure: 20%

Camille Chatterjee 2001.

- Honesty
- Loyalty
- Acceptance, humor, sense of fun, honesty, mainly acceptance of each other
- Trust, keeping your word, loyalness, love, understanding, being able to trust him around your woman
- Trust is most important, reliability, acceptance, honesty. You can accept their faults as well as their good traits
- Trust

The responses from the 2009 survey in Texas are very similar to a 1979 survey of 40,000 readers of Psychology Today magazine. The readers were to indicate what qualities they valued in a friend. The results suggest that keeping confidences and loyalty were the most important factors in a good friend. If you review the responses given by the Tarrant County College students, you will note that trust and loyalty were also the most mentioned. The next most important ingredients of friendships are warmth/affection and supportiveness. The respondents also indicated the importance of frankness and a sense of humor in a relationship. Also, the respondents emphasized, as Carl Rogers did in chapter two, the importance of unconditional acceptance from a friend—accept me as I am—not how you want me to be.

CAN YOU TRUST YOUR FRIENDS? If not, are they friends? Keeping confidence and trust are almost synonymous. Trust and respect is something people need
to earn and not be given away lightly. There are three questions that need to be answered that will help us make decisions about whether to trust someone or not:

1. **How predictable is the individual?** A predictable person is someone whose behavior is consistent—consistently good or bad. An unpredictable person keeps us guessing about what might happen next. Such volatile people may make life interesting, but they do not inspire much in the way of confidence.

2. **Can I depend upon her or him?** A dependable person can be relied upon when it counts. One way to tell is to see how a partner behaves in situations where it is possible to care or not to care.

3. **Do I have faith in that person?** Through “thick and thin” you know you can rely on this person. They make us feel “safe.”

**DOES SARAH TRUST WALT? IS HE LOYAL?**

Is Walt Predictable? Can Walt Depend on Sarah? Is Walt being honest with Sarah? Are they friends yet? Only time will tell. They are still getting acquainted. It takes time for a relationship to grow and develop. What other factors are important in becoming friends?

**SIMILARITIES.** Is it true that “opposites attract?” Or is it true that “birds of a feather flock together?” Look around. Do most of your friends have different interests, beliefs, and political preferences from you, or are they similar? Research indicates that similarities attract. We tend to select friends who are similar to us in many different aspects, including ethnic background, social status, interests, income level, occupation, status, educational level, and political preferences (Myers 2008). Similarities are also important in the selection of a husband or wife. There is a correlation between length of marriage and the similarities between the two people. The more similarities there are between the two spouses, the longer the marriage tends to last.

**DOES LIKENESS-LEAD-TO-LIKING?** Why are we drawn to people who are similar to us? For one thing, people with similar interests and attitudes are likely to enjoy the same hobbies and activities. Even more important, however, we are more likely to communicate well with people whose ideas and opinions are similar to ours, and communication is a very important aspect of an enduring relationship. It is also reinforcing to be with similar people, for they confirm our view of the world, support our opinions and beliefs, and we in turn provide mutual reinforcement for each other.
Chapter 6 Developing Close Relationships

What would it be like if your friends always disagreed with you? You are a Republican and they are Democrats; you are pro-life and they are pro-choice; you are religious and they are not; you are conservative and they are liberal; you smoke and they do not; they like rock music and you like classical music; you like to participate in sports and they would rather smoke dope. Are you going to have fun together or is there going to be a lot of conflict? Research studies have found that there are two critical similarities that are important within a relationship; they are similar beliefs and similar attitudes (Taylor and Peplau 2009). When considering a long term commitment between you and another person, ask yourself, what do we have in common? Are our beliefs and attitudes similar? If they are not, you may discover that over a period of time, conflict is more apt to develop between the two of you.

So, similarity breeds content. Birds of a feather do flock together (Hyde and DeLamater 2007). Surely you have noticed this upon discovering a special someone who shares your ideas, values, and desires—a soul mate who likes the same music, the same activities, even the same foods you do. So, how do I find someone who has something in common with me?

WHERE DO I GO TO FIND FRIENDS? You need to go to those places where you will find other people who have similar interests and needs. Proximity, or physical nearness, is a major factor in the development of friendships. When you were a young kid, most of your friends came from the local neighborhood where you lived, then from the local school you attended. This is what we mean when we say proximity—you get to know the people you are near or close to in regards to location. Proximity effects may seem self-evident, but it is sobering to realize that your friendship and

Qualities of a Friend

(In order of importance)

1. Keeps confidence—89 percent
2. Loyalty—88 percent
3. Warmth and affection—82 percent
4. Supportiveness—75 percent
5. Honesty and frankness—73 percent
6. Sense of humor—72 percent
7. Willingness to make time for me—62 percent
8. Independence—61 percent
9. Good conversationalist—59 percent
10. Intelligence—58 percent
11. Social conscience—49 percent

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love interests are shaped by seating charts in school, desk arrangements at the office or business, floor assignments in residence halls, and closeness of your neighbors (Bersheid and Reis 1998).

So, where do you go to meet people? Where have you met most of your friends? Should you go to church? What about bars and sports bars? What about political events, if you are interested in politics? Should you consider the Internet?

INTERNET DATING. There was a time when online dating or the posting of personal ads in newspapers was seen as a crutch used only by those desperate for a date. Times have changed. In the U.S., matchmaking has taken off as a huge industry only in this decade, with close to 1,000 Internet sites such as Match.com, American Singles, LavaLife, PerfectMatch, True, and E-Harmony, just to name a few. Also, online matchmaking sites in the U.S. are eyeing millions of singles in China, India and beyond. According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project (2007), about 16 million Americans have tried online dating. Pew found that 79 percent say online dating is a good way to meet people, and 52 percent say the experience was mostly positive. However, 29 percent say it was mostly negative.

Since it is true that some of these sites focus on helping people find suitable marriage partners, other sites focused on less committed involvements, and some even focus on specific populations—people over 50, parents without partners, Christian and single, and so on. (Overstreet 2007). So, be sure to research thoroughly and think carefully about how different sites work before you decide to join a site. And, be quite cautious of what personal information you post as well as specific arrangements for meeting in person.

Let’s check in on Walt and Sarah. Do they have anything in common? To begin, they are both taking European History, that is a good start. They are both in the pre-law program and enjoy studying history and political science. They both like to ski and participate in individual sports like tennis. After having coffee with Walt, Sarah thinks to herself, “Walt seems to be quite intelligent, he is very likable, I hope we get to meet again.” They seem to have a lot in common—a lot more in common than Sarah and her present boyfriend. These similarities give Walt and Sarah a lot to talk about. Does Walt have a chance to start dating Sarah? Wait and see.

DO OPPOSITES ATTRACT? What about the saying opposites attract? They do for a period of time, until the novelty wears off, and then you will discover that these dissimilar beliefs, interests, and attitudes cause more conflict than attraction. You may find someone from a different culture exciting and interesting, primarily because of the novelty. You may interpret this interest as attraction, but over time you may discover that you do not have anything in common and the excitement and interest will wane.

Another interesting phenomenon is the fact that some people are initially and spontaneously repulsed by strangers who are very dissimilar to themselves (Rosenbaum 1986). This is referred to as the repulsion hypothesis. Attitudes and values that contradict our own are physiologically arousing. Just as we implicitly assume that people who are similar to us will probably like us and treat us well, so we implicitly assume that people who are very different from us will probably dislike
us and treat us poorly. Thus, initial dissimilarities can cut a relationship short. Can you think of some examples where you have experienced this?

But, what about people we know who have been married for years and seem to be totally different and seem to be happy together? Even though they seem to be opposites, they are very compatible. Why?

**DO THEY COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER?** People with *complementary needs* seem to be drawn to each other. You notice that one of your friends is very outgoing and her boyfriend is very shy. This does not seem consistent with the idea that similarities attract. Why do they get along so well? We discover that differences in which one person’s strengths compensate for the other person’s weaknesses may lead to mutual attraction (Strong et al. 2007). The personalities seem to complement each other. In most relationships, each person supplies certain qualities that the other partner is lacking. Does your partner supply these missing characteristics?

**SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY.** According to *social exchange theory*, we measure our actions and relationships on a cost-benefit basis. People maximize their rewards and minimize their costs by employing their resources to gain the most favorable outcome (Strong et al. 2007). We generally think of rewards and costs as tangible objects, like money. However, in personal relationships, resources, rewards, and costs are more likely to be things such as love, companionship, status, power, fear, loneliness, and so on. As people enter into relationships, they have certain resources—either tangible or intangible—that others consider valuable, such as intelligence, warmth, good looks, or high social status. Individuals consciously or unconsciously use their various resources to obtain what they want, as when they “turn on” the charm. Have you ever wondered what a friend of yours sees in his or her partner? Your friend is so much better looking and more intelligent than the partner. (Attractiveness and intelligence are typical resources in our society.) However, it turns out that the partner has a good sense of humor, is considerate, and is an accomplished artist, all of which your friend values highly.

**RECIROCITY.** “Flattery will get you . . . everything or nowhere?” Which is true? What have you heard? The evidence on reciprocity indicates that we tend to like those who show that they like us and that we tend to see others as liking us more if we like them (Baron and et al. 2008). Thus, there does seem to be an interactive process in which liking leads to liking and loving leads to loving.

If our self-esteem is low, we are more susceptible to flattery, especially if the compliment is from someone of higher status. A person of high self-esteem may not be so easily swayed by positive treatment. Do you like to receive compliments? How do you feel about the person that is giving the compliments? Do they have a positive or negative influence on you? Do you now understand why some people seem to be greatly influenced by people who are nice to them, especially if that person is perceived as important to them?

Walt has been complimenting Sarah a lot the last few weeks. He tells her how nice she looks, that he likes her dress, he likes her hair style, etc. Will this influence her feelings toward Walt, especially since she has been depressed lately? The story continues.
We have discovered the importance of a friend and now we will see how the relationship evolves into a more intimate level as we begin the process of dating and mate selection.

**Dating and Mate Selection**

The changing roles of men and women, economic pressures, and the fragility of the environment have caused relationships to be stress tested on a daily basis. Even within this stressful context, however, relationship development and mate selection continue to thrive. The basis of mate selection is courtship—the interesting processes in which two people get together and hopefully stay together. So, what makes someone desirable to us? What are the traits we find attractive in potential dates and mates?

**WHAT MAKES SOMEONE DESIRABLE?** What attracts men and women to their potential mate? In part, romantic attraction is a mystery. Scientists may not know everything about why people are drawn to the people that they are, but they know something. Every culture has standards for courtship and marriage. Without really thinking about it, most of us dutifully follow our cultural dictates. As we discussed the development of friendships and relationships in the previous pages of this chapter and in chapter one, we will discover that the same characteristics that are important in finding friends are also very important in date and mate selection.

Most of us are looking for dates, mates, and friends who are similar to us (similarities). We seek out others who are about our own age, who are from the same socio-economic class, religion, and educational level. They cannot be too tall or too short, too fat or too thin in comparison to us. Such preliminary screening cuts out a surprising number of potential partners. But most of us want more. Generally, we want someone who we perceive as good looking (physical attractiveness), personable, warm, a good sense of humor, someone we can trust, and who is intelligent. We also want someone whose views match our own. Other important variables that most of us also consider are reciprocity, personality fit, and most important, our own self-concept (self-confidence).

Review Gender and You, What Characteristics Do I Desire in a Potential Mate, and decide how you would rate the characteristics. Are there any other gender mate preferences?

Research shows that males and females exhibit both similarities and differences in what they look for in a marital partner.

- In a 1997 survey of American college students’ most preferred qualities in a mate, both men and women ranked mutual attraction/love, dependable character, and emotional stability/maturity, respectively, the highest. (Buss et al. 2001).
- Women tend to place a higher value than men on potential partners’ socioeconomic status, intelligence, ambition, and financial prospects (Buss 2005).
- Men consistently show more interest than women in potential partners’ youthfulness, good health, and physical attractiveness (Buss 2005).
- Men prefer wives who are somewhat younger than they are, and women prefer husbands that are somewhat older. However, we are noticing a new trend—as women become more economically independent, they...
MATE SELECTION THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. Do people from different countries and different cultures look for the same traits when selecting a mate? The traits that people look for in a marriage vary around the world. In one large-scale study from thirty-seven countries and five islands, people varied in what they considered important in selecting a mate (Buss et al. 1990). Chastity was the most important factor in marital selection in China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Taiwan, and the Palestinian Arab culture. Adults from Japan and Ireland placed moderate importance on chastity. In contrast, adults in Sweden, Finland, Norway, the Netherlands, and Germany generally said that chastity was not important in selecting a marital partner. Researchers were surprised that men and women in the Netherlands, for example, do not care about chastity at all. Neither is virginity valued much in the Scandinavian countries such as Norway and Sweden. In China, however, virginity is indispensable in a mate—marrying a non-virgin is virtually out of the question.

Adults from the Zulu culture in South Africa, Estonia, and Columbia placed a high value on housekeeping skills in their marital preference. By contrast, adults in all Western European countries (except Spain, Canada and the United States) said that housekeeping was not an important trait in their partner.

Infatuation is when you think that he’s as sexy as Robert Redford, as smart as Henry Kissinger, as noble as Ralph Nader, as funny as Woody Allen, and as athletic as Jimmy Conners. Love is when you realize that he’s as sexy as Woody Allen, as smart as Jimmy Conners, as funny as Ralph Nader, as athletic as Henry Kissinger and nothing like Robert Redford in any category—but you’ll take him anyway.

JUDITH VORST

What Characteristics Do I Desire in a Potential Mate?

Following is how a large sample of males and females from a number of different cultures rated the importance of 18 characteristics in a potential mate. A rank of one is the most important and a rank of 18 is the least important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Rank</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mutual attraction-love</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional stability and maturity</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependable character</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasing disposition</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and good intelligence</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good health</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good looks</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociability</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Desire for home and children</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refinement, neatness</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambition and industriousness</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similar education</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good cook and housekeeper</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favorable social status or rating</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similar religious background</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good financial prospect</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chastity (no prior sexual intercourse)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similar political background</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Adapted from Santrock (2006).
What about religion? It plays an important role in marital preferences in many cultures. For example, Islam stresses the honor of the male and the purity of the female. It also emphasizes the woman’s role in childbearing, childrearing, educating children, and instilling the Islamic faith in their children.

Whether we are drawn to people by familiarity, similarity, beauty, or some other quality, mutual attraction sometimes progresses from friendship to the more intense, complex, and mysterious feeling of love.

**Becoming Lovers**

There is a great similarity between love relationships and good-friend relationships. In both of these are high levels of trust, mutual respect, and acceptance. Further, the interactions between the people involved are characterized by high levels of understanding, nurturing, and confiding. Nonetheless, the love relationship with its greater depth of caring and exclusiveness, typically generates greater emotion and power. As a result, it can affect individuals more, having the potential to meet a broader sweep of human needs or to cause greater frustration and distress.

Remember when Walt saw Sarah for the first time? It was the first day of class and Walt was fearful of having to take the European History class, because he had heard that this professor was one of the most difficult at the college. He was nervous and his heart was beating rapidly as he looked up and saw Sarah for the first time. Was it love? Walt thinks so. He attributed his physical arousal to Sarah and not to the fear of taking the class.

**WHAT IS LOVE?** Have you ever looked at someone for the first time and said to yourself, “I think I’m in love?” Is there such a thing as love at first sight? Research has found that we do not fall in love—we grow into love. Then, what is love?

This is a question people have been asking for years. Mass media, romantic novels, soap operas, songs, etc., have all been attempting to answer this question.

- Love is a many splendored thing
- All that the world needs is love
- Love makes the world go around
- I can’t live without love
- How do I love thee, let me count the ways
- Love means never having to say you are sorry

Our lives seem to evolve around this subject. But, does anyone know what love is? Everyone seems to have their own definition of love. When your date says that he or she loves you, what does your date mean? Is it the same as when your mother or father says it to you? What is your definition of love? Before you continue, take a few minutes and write down your definition of love. Share your definition of love with your friends and loved ones. Compare your definition with theirs.

We have found a definition of love that we would like to share with you. When the satisfaction, security, and development of another person is as
important to you as your own satisfaction, security, and development, love exists (Harry Stack Sullivan 1968). Using this definition of love, you will find that you can measure your love not only for your significant other, but your mother, father, siblings, friends, animals, and even inanimate objects. What do you think?

What are your answers to the above questions? These are some interesting myths about love that many of us have been agonizing over for years. Let us take a look at these myths and dispel some of the confusion regarding them (Weiten and Lloyd 2009).

1. *Does true love last forever?* It would be nice if love would last forever, but most of us have found that it does not. People who believe this myth may pursue love forever, looking for the ideal one that will bring complete happiness. This person will experience a lifetime of frustration. Would we have divorce if love lasted forever? It would be more realistic to view love as a wonderful experience that might be encountered on several occasions throughout life.

2. *Does love conquer all?* Many people believe that love and marriage will allow them to overcome (conquer) all their frustrations and problems in life. A supportive partner will help you solve many of your problems, but it does not guarantee success. Many people jump into relationships for this purpose, only to discover that the relationship creates additional problems.

3. *Is love a purely positive experience?* Mass media, television, romance novels, etc. are creating an unrealistic expectation that love is such a positive experience. In reality it can be a peak experience, but love can also bring intense negative emotions and great pain. As many of you know, a lover is capable of taking us to emotional peaks in either direction.

4. *Do you know when you are in love?* There is no physiological cue to tell us we are in love. So the emotional feeling and the cognitive interpretation is different for each of us. It is a state of confusion that many of us agonize over. It is normal to question our feelings toward another person. Remember, we grow to love someone gradually and usually do not fall in love.

5. *Do you behave irrationally when you fall in love?* Does love take control of your behavior? Some people stop eating, quit studying, are unable to concentrate on their job and avoid taking responsibility for their actions because they are in love. If you allow your heart to take control of your behavior, you may become vulnerable to irrational decisions about sexual involvement or long term commitments.
LOVE IS? Love is complex! Love is confusing! Most of you are aware of this. Love is difficult to measure and perplexing. People are yearning for it, will die for it, and even kill for it. But for some reason we have avoided studying it until the last few years. Psychologists are now doing research attempting to discover what love is. Robert Sternberg (1988) has developed a theory of love that includes three distinct components: 1) **passion**, an intense physiological desire for another person; 2) **intimacy**, the feeling that one can share all one's thoughts and actions with another; 3) **commitment**, the willingness to stay with a person through thick and thin, or for better or worse, or in sickness or health. Ideally, marriage is characterized by a healthy amount of all three components. Various combinations of these components result in quite different types of love. Figure 6.1 will demonstrate some of these. For example, Sternberg suggests that **romantic love** involves a high degree of passion and intimacy, yet lacks substantial commitment to the other person. **Companionate love** is marked by a great deal of intimacy and commitment but little passion. **Consummate love** is the most complete because it includes a high level of all three components. It is the most satisfying because the relationship is likely to fulfill many of the needs of each partner.

Walt cannot think of anything but Sarah. “She’s so wonderful, she’s really pretty, I don’t think I can live without her.” What is Walt experiencing? Is it love yet? Early in a relationship it may only be passion. When love has only passion (without intimacy or commitment), it is often called “infatuation.” We are infatuated with the other person when we cannot stop thinking about them and become physiologically aroused by touching, seeing, or even thinking of them.

Having a lot in common with Walt, Sarah has a warm comfortable feeling for him. She is concerned about his success and is willing to do whatever she can to help him succeed. Is this the intimacy stage? When love has only intimacy (without passion or commitment), we might be better off calling it “liking.” This is when we enjoy being with our partner, respect them, and share with them. Would you call this love?

Does Sarah only like Walt or could it be something else? Sarah has been thinking more about the relationship recently, as time goes by she’s considering the fact that this relationship could last forever. She would stay with Walt through “thick and thin.” Is she getting more serious over the relationship? Is it love yet? When love has only commitment, it is “empty love.” We display empty love when we remain in a relationship from which all passion and intimacy have gone, as unhappy couples do “for the sake of the children.” Is this all that Sarah is experiencing?

Wait a minute! There may be more to Walt’s and Sarah’s relationship. What’s missing? Take a look at the Triangle of Love (Figure 6.1). We notice that their relationship is maturing. There seems to be an equal mixture of intimacy, passion and decision/commitment, and this is called consummate love—an ideal, but difficult to attain.
relationship. This is the type of relationship we should all be striving to reach. Do all cultures experience this? See Focus on Diversity—Is There a Cultural Influence on Love?

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOVE.** Early in a relationship, passion is usually high, which may be one reason new love relationships and affairs are most intense. Intimacy, however, is not as high because the partners have not spent enough time together or shared enough experiences and emotions to be able to understand each other completely. Passionate love without intimacy creates a risk of
misunderstanding and jealousy about any other person or activity that seems to interfere with the relationship.

Over time, passion seems to fade while intimacy and commitment grow stronger. According to Sternberg, passion is like an addiction: in the beginning a touch of the hand, a smile, even a mere glance will produce excitement. Gradually, however, one needs a greater dose of stimulation to get the same feeling. We habituate to the passion, and thus to continue this intense feeling for one another, novel and significant stimuli must be provided by each of the two individuals.

An understanding of the three components of love and the developmental process will help couples in the building of their relationship. A couple may want to schedule specific times each week, away from children and family, for a period of intimate sharing—a time to discuss problems as well as happy times. You may want to keep the passage burning by scheduling a weekend at the beach, buying your mate a special gift, taking them out to a special dinner, serving them breakfast in bed, etc. What else can you do to maintain the three components of love?

THE FIVE LOVE LANGUAGES. After more than 30 years of marriage counseling, Dr. Gary Chapman (1995), author of the Five Love Languages, has concluded that there are basically five emotional love languages—five ways that people speak and understand emotional love. And, it is highly possible that your emotional love language and the language of your spouse may be as different as Chinese is from English. No matter how hard you try to express your love in English, if your spouse understands only Chinese, you will never understand how to love each other. Dr. Chapman believes that love is something you do for someone else; therefore, it is critical to learn to express or respond to the needs of your spouse. Realizing that none of these are gender specific, Dr. Chapman’s languages are as follows:

1. **Words of Affirmation.** Some people need verbal appreciation and encouragement in order to feel loved. This may be nothing more than “You look great in that suit,” or “You are the best yard guy we’ve ever had,” or “I know you will finish your degree.”
2. **Quality Time.** This is more than mere proximity. It’s about focusing all your energy on your mate. It’s turning off the TV and giving each other quality time—quality listening time, or just doing something together.

3. **Receiving Gifts.** It is one thing to remember birthdays and anniversaries; it’s quite more to learn how to give “little” gifts of thoughtfulness throughout the week. Free, frequent, expensive, or rare, if your mate relates to the language of giving gifts, any visible sign of your love will leave him/her feeling happy and secure in your relationship.

4. **Acts of Service.** Sometimes simple chores or tasks around the house that are helpful to another person can be an undeniable expression of love. The task may be to discover what acts performed out of the kindness of your heart—not obligation—will show your love for your spouse.

5. **Physical Touch.** Many mates feel the most loved when they receive physical contact from their partner—a hand on the shoulder, a hug, a kiss, holding hands, a touch on the cheek. Remember, also, that sexual contact, although extremely important, is only one dialect of physical touch.

Perhaps the greatest task is to determine which love language means the most to your spouse, but it is well worth it for a satisfying life together.

As we look at the relationship of Walt and Sarah, we find that Walt finally had the “guts” to ask Sarah out for coffee after class. They discovered that they have a lot in common (similarities) and have begun to disclose a lot of personal information about themselves to the other person. As their personal disclosure increases, their level of trust increases. Their attraction for one another grows. The flame is lit and the passion becomes more intense. But, wait a minute, what happened to Sarah’s boyfriend? Even though Sarah and her boyfriend have dated for more than four years, they really did not have much in common other than school activities. And remember that absence makes the heart grow fonder for someone else (proximity). Remember, Sarah’s boyfriend is going to college in another state.

Sarah and Walt have similar values, religious beliefs, attitudes about life, and the same interests. They are beginning to spend more and more time together and the feeling of intimacy and commitment grows stronger. Sarah is no longer depressed—she is excited about life and her new relationship. She is looking to the future and setting goals. How does Walt feel about the relationship? Is he committed to the relationship?

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**Who Works Harder, Males or Females?**

If you are female and you think you do a lot more of the work when it comes to making your relationship run smoothly—you are right. Researchers say that women have more relationship skills.

- **Women are better communicators.** They are more comfortable in sharing their feelings and being psychologically intimate (Miller 2005).
- **On the communication score,** most men are still playing catch-up with women. For men, actual physical proximity is often as good as intimacy (“I’m here, aren’t I?”) (Miller 2005).
- **Women are more likely than men to work at improving a relationship** (Lawson 2005).
- **Men don’t think as often about a relationship’s complexities** (Lawson 2005).
MEN VS. WOMEN. On the whole, men tend to think they are compatible with their partner before women do. One reason may be that men and women tend to have different attitudes about love. Men are more likely to be “romantics.” For example, they are inclined to believe in love at first sight, and to regard true love as magical, impossible to explain or understand.

Women are more likely to be “pragmatists,” believing that financial security is as important as passion in nourishing a close relationship and that there are many possible individuals that a person could learn to love. Women tend to be more cautious than men before deciding to take the final step. Researchers say that women seem to do a lot more work when it comes to making a relationship work. What is the next step? Is it marriage or some alternative?

**Becoming Committed**

It is not entirely clear how and when commitment begins. At some time and in some way, two people in a relationship decide that their satisfaction or happiness with each other is significantly greater than in their relationships with other people. Thus, they agree to begin a relatively long-lasting, more intimate relationship that to some extent excludes other close relationships. The couple agrees to depend on each other for the satisfaction of important needs, including companionship, love, and sex. The commitment may or may not include the decision to live together.

Making an agreement with another person to enter into a deeper, more exclusive, and lasting relationship is a crucially important life decision that must be made freely and with careful thought. Many individuals, consciously or unconsciously, feel pressured to enter into a relationship that they are not sure is good for them. Many people are not happy in their existing relationship or social situation, be it a bad home environment, an abusive mate, getting too old, being lonely, an alcoholic or addicted mate, etc., so they feel pressured to commit themselves to a new relationship as a means to escape the bad situation. A person who is pushed or pressured into a relationship will discover that their commitment is weaker and less enduring. If the commitment is made in defiance of pressure from parents or peers, the commitment may be very strong. As many of you know, if your parents were to tell you that you cannot date a specific person, you will do whatever it takes to make sure you will date them and be more committed to them.

**Is Love a Feeling or a Decision?**

One neglects to see an important factor in love, that of will. To love somebody is not just a strong feeling—it is a decision, it is a judgment, it is a promise. If love were only a feeling, there would be no basis for the promise to love each other forever. A feeling comes and it may go. How can I judge that it will stay forever, if my actions do not involve judgment and decision?

Erich Fromm
Psychoanalyst

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*Love is often nothing but a favorable exchange between two people who get the most of what they can expect, considering their value on the personality market.*

Erich Fromm

*Love is more than a feeling; it’s a journey that you take with another person and both of you are active participants in how that journey unfolds.*

Patricia Love
This phenomenon is known as *psychological reactance*—the tendency to protect or restore one's sense of freedom or social control, often by doing the opposite of what has been demanded. This is also known as the *Romeo and Juliet effect*, where their love was intensified, not weakened, by their families' opposition. In summation, a commitment is likely to be strongest when it is arrived at freely and when it is cemented by taking action as a result of the commitment.

**SHOULD I REMAIN SINGLE?** Although alternatives to marriage are more viable than ever, experts still say that approximately ninety percent of us will marry at least once. During the past 40 years in the United States, the average age of marriage has risen steadily. According to Census Bureau data (2008), the average age women marry is 26 years and for men 28 years. Furthermore, the proportion of people age 30 to 34 who have never married continues to increase.

Remaining single is becoming a more viable lifestyle. More and more people are remaining single. Furthermore, the negative stereotype of people who remain single, which pictures them as lonely, frustrated, depressed, odd, and unchosen is disappearing.

Studies have shown that married people live longer and are healthier throughout those extra years. Marriage does seem to help both spouses cope better with stress, though men benefit more than women. However, the stress of a bad marriage can undo much of the good that comes along with a happy one (Strong et al. 2007).

It is interesting to note that most studies find that single women are more satisfied with their lives and less distressed than comparable single men, and various lines of evidence suggest that women get along without men better than men get along without women (Stack and Eshleman 1998; Weiten and Lloyd 2009).

**SHOULD WE LIVE TOGETHER BEFORE MARRIAGE?** There was a time when “shacking up” was not viewed in a positive light. Today, this is called *cohabitation*, meaning two partners living together as if married, and it’s no longer viewed in such a negative light. Cohabitation has become increasingly common, not only in the United States, but also in other industrialized countries. For example, rates are high in Great Britain, Australia, Denmark, Finland, France, and Sweden. In fact, more children in Sweden are born to cohabitating couples than to married couples. The percentage of U.S. couples who cohabit before marriage has greatly increased over the past 40 years, with approximately 67 million opposite-sex couples living together in 2008 (Census Bureau 2008). It has increased all across socioeconomic, age, and racial groups (Bumpass and Lu 2002; Strong 2007; Census Bureau 2008).

The majority of people who cohabit are under the age of 24 (Overstreet 2007). Most cohabitating relationships generally don’t last more than 2 years. Less than 1 out of 10 lasts five years, and a little over 50 percent eventually marry. And, approximately one-third of cohabitating couples have children (Hyde and Delamater 2007).

Not only do many couples consider cohabitation a prelude to marriage—a trial marriage, they also believe that cohabitation improves the chances of marital success (Wartik 2005). However, researchers have found an association between premarital cohabitation and increased marital discord and divorce rates (Bumpass and Lu 2000; Coontz 2006). In fact, in one study, 40 percent of the couples who lived together before getting married divorced
Consider this . . .

Will Your Marriage Last Forever?

There is no foolproof recipe for lasting, happy marriages. Recent studies have provided us with some valuable clues as to what makes a happy and successful marriage (Strong et al. 2007).

- Happily married couples spend a lot of focused time together doing what they both enjoy, much as they did in their courtship days before they married.
- They share many of the same values, such as the importance of physical intimacy, childrearing practices, religious beliefs, and morals.
- These couples exhibited a high degree of flexibility—they have the ability to accept change in their partners as well as changes in the nature of the married relationship.

Other factors that seem to be important predictors of marital success include:

- **Age at time of marriage**—couples who marry young have a higher divorce rate.
- **Length of courtship**—longer periods of courtship are associated with greater probability of marital success.
- **Family background**—people whose parents were unhappily married are more likely than others to have an unsatisfactory marriage (Amato and DeBoer 2001).
- **Personality**—if one or both partners has a serious psychological or emotional disorder, problems will occur.

within the first 10 years of marriage compared with 31 percent for those who didn’t live together first (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2002).

What seems to be the reasons for the higher divorce rate among couples who cohabit? Researchers believe that couples who decide to cohabit are already at a higher risk of divorce than couples who do not, since they tend to be more liberal, sexually experienced, have less traditional attitudes toward marriage, family, and divorce, have slightly lower incomes, and are slightly less religious than non-cohabitants (Bumpass and Lu 2002; Smock 2002). A lot depends on the individual couple—especially their values.

As more and more people across different backgrounds enter cohabitation relationships, we will learn more concerning whether the **experiences of cohabitation or characteristics of those who cohabit** have greater impact on later marriage.

**WHY SHOULD I MARRY?** People tend to marry out of mixed motives—many of them unclear even to themselves. Now that marriage is no longer necessary for economic survival or the satisfaction of sexual needs, love has become the major rationale for getting married and staying married. Unfortunately, people sometimes marry for the wrong reasons: to become respectable, for money, for a regular sexual outlet, for status, or to make their parents happy. Even cohabiting couples may marry for the wrong reason. Just when the relationship begins to falter, marriage may be sought to save the relationship. It’s a temporary “fix,” because it does not solve the underlying conflicts.
In *Are You the One for Me?*, Barbara Deangelis (2004) reminds readers of some potentially bad love and marriage choices:

- You care more about your partner than he or she does about you.
- Your partner cares more about you than you care about him or her.
- You are in love with your partner’s potential.
- You are on a rescue mission.
- You look up to your partner as a role model.
- You are infatuated with your partner for external reasons.
- You have partial compatibility—a lot in common in one area—but you ignore the rest of the relationship.
- You choose a partner to be rebellious.
- You choose a partner as a reaction to your previous partner.
- Your partner is unavailable (married or living with someone).

Marriage is a risky proposition. In deciding to get married, people make a long range projection about the future of their relationship. Obviously, it is difficult to predict thirty, forty, or even fifty years of commitment on the basis of one or two years of premarital interaction.

One way to determine what may help maintain relationships is to ask couples who have been together for years what they think is important. Robert and Jeanette Lauer (1990) studied three hundred and fifty couples who had been married for at least fifteen years. It is interesting to note that both husbands and wives, out of fifteen choices, listed the same seven qualities as being important to a successful marriage:

1. My spouse is my best friend.
2. I like my spouse as a person.
3. Marriage is a long-term commitment.
4. We agree on aims and goals.
5. My spouse has grown more interesting.
6. I want the relationship to succeed.
7. Marriage is sacred.

Couples were asked questions about their marriage, ranging from interests, hobbies, sex, money and attitudes toward their spouses, and reasons why their marriages had lasted.

The most frequently given reason for a lasting marriage is having a positive attitude toward one’s partner. These individuals see their spouse as their best friend and they like him or her as a person. They are aware that their partner has faults, but their likable qualities more than offset their shortcomings. Many people stated that the present generation takes the marriage vows too lightly and are not willing to work at solving their problems. Marriage is a commitment and takes a lot of work. Both partners have to work at solving their problems. Another key ingredient to a lasting marriage is a mutual agreement about aims and goals of life, such as the desire to make the marriage last. A satisfying sex life is important, but this is not what makes the marriage last. In his New York Times Best-Seller, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, John Gottman (2004) believes that the determining factor in whether wives feel satisfied with the sex, romance, and passion in their marriage is, by 70 percent, the quality of the couples friendship. For men, the determining factor is, by 70 percent, the quality of the couple’s friendship.
Marital Adjustment

During courtship, many of us wear “rose-colored glasses.” We tend to ignore or not notice our partners’ faults. We tend to focus mostly on pleasurable activities and our partner’s positive characteristics. But when people marry, they must face reality and the problems that they will encounter within this new relationship. Suddenly, marriage brings duties and obligations. One is no longer responsible for only oneself but now shares responsibility for two people and perhaps more if children arrive.

Furthermore, one’s identity is changed with marriage. No longer are you simply you—you are now Sarah’s husband, or Walt’s wife, or Jon’s mother or father. You become interdependent with others in your family and not independent. For some people this loss of independence may become a crisis, but for others this new identity may give them a new lease on life.

The changing nature of male and female roles creates problems for all types of couples as they settle down to live together. Even the most mundane tasks may become a problem. Who pays the bills? Who takes out the trash? Who cooks? Who will stay home and take care of the family? There is no such thing as a problem-free marriage. Successful marriages depend on the couples’ ability to handle their problems.

ROLE EXPECTATIONS. What is the woman’s role in married life? Is it different from a man’s role? Should a man’s and a woman’s role be different? When a couple marry, they assume new roles, that of husband and wife. We all have developed our own expectations of how a wife or husband should behave. These expectations may vary greatly from one person to another. What happens if your expectations are different from your partners? Serious problems may occur. The more the two partners agree about marital roles, the more likely the marriage will last over a longer period of time.

Where did you learn what the role of a husband or a wife should be? Most of us learned this from watching our parents through the process called modeling. But times are changing and other social forces are having an effect on our roles within a relationship. Careers are changing the timing of marriage and caretaking roles of the family. The women’s movement has given women more options and has changed their perception of what their role is in a relationship. Marriage seems to be in a state of transition, and, consequently, most of us are in a state of confusion as to what role we should be playing.

It is imperative that couples discuss role expectations in depth before marriage. If they discover that their views are very different, they need to take seriously the potential for problems. Many people ignore gender-role disagreements, thinking they can “straighten out” their partners later on. But as we have all discovered, it is difficult to change our own behavior and more difficult to change someone else’s behavior—especially their attitude.

While we are dating, and during the honeymoon period, which can be any time from the wedding day to a year or so from that day, many people do not see the people they love as they really are, but rather as they wish (expect)
them to be. We see what we expect to see, we hear what we want to hear—this is a psychological phenomenon of perception that can interfere with the way we perceive the world. We tend to perceive only the positive characteristics of our partners and ignore the negative characteristics. In essence, a person is in love with their own dreams and ideals and not with the person they marry. Living together day in and day out makes it only a matter of time until each partner is forced to compare ideals with reality.

The Honeymoon Is Over. One morning, after Walt and Sarah have been married for about a year, Sarah awakens and “realizes” that Walt is not the same man she married. She accuses him of changing for the worse. He is not as considerate and as kind to her as he was before. He does not pay as much attention to her. He doesn’t enjoy going out all the time like they used to. He just wants to stay home. Walt insists, of course, that he has not changed; he is the same person that she married and he enjoys quiet evenings at home alone with her.

This interaction may be signaling that the "honeymoon" is over for Walt and Sarah. This stage is very important in most marriages. It usually indicates that the unrealistic, overly high expectations about marriage and one's mate created by "love" are being reexamined. No one can live up to perfection. In a successful relationship, it means that subjective perceptions are becoming more realistic and more objective. It also means that we are at last coming to know our mate as a real human being rather than as a projection of our expectations. Realizing the humanness of our partner allows us to relax, to be human as well and not feel that we have to live up to our partner's expectations. If my partner can make mistakes and be less than perfect, so can I, thank goodness.

After the honeymoon period, intensity diminishes and satisfaction with marriage generally dips, especially for wives. The most commonly cited reason for this change is the arrival of children. For most couples, the time and effort spent on parenting usually takes time away from the husband-wife relationship. Within the past two decades, there does appear to be an increase in married couples making the choice not to have children or at least delay having children (U.S. Census Bureau 2008). Some of the reasons often cited are the great costs involved in raising children, the possible conflicts involved with preparation for college and/or career improvements/advancements, loss of autonomy, and the great responsibility of raising children (Bulcroft and Teachman 2004).

What are some of the other issues and problems that a couple may encounter as they begin to face the reality of being married and functioning as a “twosome” rather than an individual? Yes, so many decisions to make!

MARRIAGE, CAREER AND PARENTHOOD. Should the woman work after she gets married? Should she work after she has children? Should the husband stay at home with the children while the wife pursues a career? While dual-career couples are the norm today, finances often make the decision regarding the above questions. However, resentments and mixed feelings can occur for many couples.

If a woman has to work to help provide for a family, she may feel guilty because she is not at home taking care of the kids. What if she doesn’t have to work but prefers to work rather than staying home with the kids? Should she feel guilty for this when this is clearly what makes her happy? What if the
woman has the more lucrative career and the decision is made for the man to stay home with the kids? Will he resent his breadwinning wife? Will he maintain his feelings of masculinity when he is not the person who provides money for the family?

Whatever arrangements couples make, Dr. Deborah Siegel (2007) indicates that psychologist Barry McCarthy urges couples to talk about their arrangements in terms of two-year timeframes, agreeing to make a point to check in every six months to see how well the arrangements are working for each individual. Are there other issues to consider?

One common problem of two-paycheck families is the division of housework and childcare. It is interesting to note that unmarried couples who live together divide the housework more evenly than married couples, while men who live with their partners before marrying them do more housework than men who move directly into marriage (Coontz 2006). Men’s contribution to housework and childcare has increased in recent decades, but studies indicate that wives are still doing the bulk of the household chores in America, even when they work outside the home (Coltrane 2001; Coontz 2006.). Wives still do the vast majority of “women’s work,” such as cooking, cleaning, and laundry, while men continue to do mostly traditional “male chores,” such as auto maintenance and outdoor tasks. As you might expect, men who are better educated or younger tend to be more helpful around the house. Surprisingly, however, the more children a couple has, the less likely they are to share equally in the household labor, even if both are working an equal number of hours outside the home. Thus, many employed mothers feel overworked and under appreciated (Warner 2005).

Perhaps it is not surprising that a Pew Research Center survey in 2007 showed 60 percent, up from 48 percent 10 years ago, of America’s working mothers say their ideal situation would include a part-time job, rather than working full time or staying at home.

What other issues and concerns do married couples encounter as they strive to succeed in their marriage?

**Marital Conflict**

What do most couples argue about? Is it sex, money, children, power, roles and responsibilities, jealousy, or extra-marital affairs? *Money* ranks as the single most common cause of conflict in marriage. Money not only influences a couples’ lifestyle but also their feelings of security, self-esteem, confidence, and acceptance by others. Without money, families live in a constant state of stress, fearing the loss of jobs, illness, or household emergencies. Husbands tend to view themselves as poor providers, and their self-esteem may crumble as a result.

Neither financial stability nor wealth can ensure marital satisfaction. Even when financial resources are plentiful, money can be a source of marital strain. Quarrels about how to spend money are common and potentially damaging at all income levels. Money is freedom, money is power, and sometimes men and women even lie about it. In fact, Louise
Lague (2001) reports in a poll of 1,000 married people, ages 18 and over, half of them men and half women, that the most “hushed-up” issue was how much the respondents paid for something they bought. Couples that tend to be more satisfied with their marriage engage in more joint decisions regarding their finances in comparison to couples that eventually divorce.

Examine the last sentence, and decide what underlies most problems in relationships—be it a marriage, a business relationship, or wherever two or more people interact.

**CAN A BAD RELATIONSHIP BE GOOD?** Psychologist John Gottman (2004; 2007) has been studying love and marriage for over 30 years, with a concentrated 10-year study that has provided valuable research data behind his theories. He believes that some negative emotions used in arguments are more toxic than others: criticism, contempt, defensiveness and stonewalling. Criticism involves constantly expressing negative evaluations of one’s partner. Contempt involves communication insulting feelings that one’s spouse is inferior. Defensiveness involves responding to criticism and contempt with obstructive communication escalates marital conflict. Stonewalling involves withdrawing from a discussion, most frequently seen among men. Gottman further indicates that he has learned at least two things from the couples he has studied: One is the importance in building and maintaining a friendship in your marriage so that you give your partner the benefit of the doubt when times are tough. This takes constant work. Second is that you have a choice every time you say something to your partner. He feels you can say something that will either nurture the relationship or tear it down. In other words, you may win a particular fight with your spouse, but you could lose the marriage in the long run.

Gottman contends that many aspects of marriage, often considered critical to long-term success, such as how intensely people fight; whether they face conflict or avoid it; how well they solve problems; how compatible they are socially, financially, even sexually are less important than people and professionals once thought. Gottman believes that none of these things matter to a marriage’s longevity as much as maintaining that crucial ratio of five-to-one.

**WHAT IS THIS FIVE-TO-ONE RATIO?** This is the difference between divorce and a positive long-term relationship according to Gottman—it is mind-boggling in its very simplicity. Satisfied couples maintain a five-to-one ratio of positive interactions to negative interactions in their relationship. It is hard to believe that the longevity of your relationship depends primarily on you being five times as nice to your partner as you are nasty to them. This may be surprising to you (Gottman 1995; 2004).

- Wildly explosive relationships that vacillate between heated arguments and passionate reconciliations can be as happy—and long lasting—as those that seem more emotionally stable. They may even be more exciting and intimate.
- Couples who start out complaining about each other have some of the most stable marriages over time, while those who do not fight early on are more likely to face the road to divorce.
Fighting, whether rare or frequent, is sometimes the healthiest thing a couple can do for the relationship. In fact, blunt anger, appropriately expressed, “seems to immunize marriages against deterioration.”

Emotionally inexpressive marriages, which may seem like repressed volcanoes destined to explode, are actually very successful—so long as the couple maintains the five-to-one ratio in what they do express to each other. In fact, too much emotional catharsis among such couples can “scare the hell out of them,” says Gottman.

How warmly you remember the story of your relationship foretells your chances of staying together. In one study that involved couples telling about how their relationship evolved, psychologists were able to predict—with an astonishing 94 percent accuracy—which couples would be divorced within three years.

Men who do housework are likely to have happier marriages, greater physical health, even better sex lives than men who do not. (Hearing this, men may be running to find the vacuum cleaner.)

In happy marriages, there are no discernible gender differences in terms of the quantity and quality of emotional expression. In fact, men in happy marriages are more likely to reveal intimate personal information about themselves than women.

What do you think about the five-to-one ratio? Should we be teaching couples how to apply this to their relationship?

Communication Problems

Successful communication is the cornerstone of any relationship. Such communication must be open, realistic, tactful, caring, and valued. Maintaining this kind of communication is not always easy unless all the people involved are committed to the belief that good communication is important to life and marital satisfaction. This sounds simple, yet couples in marital trouble almost always list failure to communicate as one of their major problems. Basically, communication failures occur because one or perhaps both partners choose not to communicate or because of the lack of communication skills. You may want to refer back to the communication chapter and apply the material discussed in that chapter to improve upon your communication skills.

Many couples get so involved in the activities of everyday life—their career, their family activities and their outside interests—that they forget about the needs and interests of their spouse. Even though they spend time with their spouse, they really do not communicate. If this seems to be true of your relationship, you may want to change this by scheduling a time to communicate. Tell your mate that you would like to take them out to dinner every Thursday night, even if it is to a fast food restaurant, so you have a time to sit down and talk. This is your time, do not take the kids or anyone else. You may want to write down things you want to talk about during the week so you won’t forget about them. Many times a person will get to the scheduled session and say, “There’s something I want to talk about, but I forgot what it was.” You may want to schedule a weekend away from the family every few months so you can talk and plan for the future. See Consider this, Making Up versus Breaking Up, further in the chapter to see the importance of communication in a relationship.
How To

Have a Happy Relationship

- **Learn to Calm Down**—Do not let the emotions take control of you. Do not over-react; wait, relax, take a walk, remove yourself from the stress event for a period of time until you have time to calm down and respond logically. Be sure you are ready to not bring up past faults, mistakes, and problems. Once you have calmed down, you can work on the other basic “keys” to improving their relationship.

- **Validate Your Partner**—Validation involves “putting yourself in your partner’s shoes and imagining his or her emotional state.” Let your partner know that you understand how he or she feels and why, even if you do not agree. You can also show validation by acknowledging your partner’s point of view, accepting appropriate responsibility, and apologizing when you are clearly wrong. If this still seems too much of a stretch, at least let your partner know that you are trying to understand, even if you’re finding it hard.

- **Learn to Speak and Listen Non-Defensively**—This is tough, Gottman admits, but defensiveness is a very dangerous response, and it needs to be interrupted. One of the most powerful things you can do—in addition to working toward the ideal of listening with empathy and speaking without blame—is to “begin to apply praise and admiration into your relationship.” A little positive reinforcement (appreciation) goes a long way toward changing the chemistry between couples.

- **Practice, Practice, Practice**—Gottman calls this “overlearning,” doing something so many times that it becomes second nature. The goal is to be able to calm yourself down, communicate non-defensively, and validate your partner automatically—even in the heat of an argument.

Do you agree?


Family Violence

Physical violence is most apt to erupt in families lacking communication skills. Such families often cannot talk to one another, do not listen to one another, and simply lack enough communication skills to make themselves understood. Children are often physically violent because they have not learned how to communicate. In a way, adults who cannot communicate are like children and too often express themselves physically rather than verbally (Strong et al. 2007).

Family violence is difficult to measure and document because most of it occurs in the privacy of the home, away from public view, and also goes unreported. Family violence includes child abuse, violence between spouses, sibling abuse, sexual abuse, and parental abuse by children, especially elderly parents. (Duffy and Atwater 2008).

The causes of family violence are many, including problems in the society (such as cultural attitudes toward women and children), in parents (such as drug addiction, alcoholism, and financial problems), and in the child (such as being a difficult child or being sickly). The most effective strategies should emphasize prevention and treatment rather than blame. In addition, any measures that help reduce stress and increase individuals’ social support will
make violence and abuse less likely. Remember, good communication skills underlie all good relationships.

It is actually easier than you think to avoid a violent or abusive relationship. Our problem is that we allow our emotions to take control of our behavior and not our common sense and intellect. Recent research has shown that in most relationships where violence has occurred, some form of abuse began during the dating period. If a person is abusive while the couple is dating, what are the chances of the person not being abusive when they are married? Not very likely! A person does not change overnight or as soon as they sign a marriage license. To the contrary, some people feel that the marriage license is a sign of ownership and they can now do whatever they want to their partner. If you are in an abusive relationship before marriage you may want to “think twice” before making a serious commitment to that person.

**Codependence**

But, wait a minute, you know you can help that person. They need your help and you love them and you feel you can help them change. If you can get them to marry you it will be easier to help them change. This sounds

**Consider this . . .**

**What Is Codependency?**

- My good feelings about who I am stem from being liked by you.
- My good feelings about who I am stem from receiving approval from you.
- Your struggles affect my serenity. My mental attitude focuses on solving your problems or relieving your pain.
- My mental attention is focused on pleasing you.
- My mental attention is focused on protecting you.
- My mental attention is focused on manipulating you “to do it my way.”
- My self-esteem is bolstered by solving your problems.
- My self-esteem is bolstered by relieving your pain.
- My own hobbies and interests are put aside. My time is spent sharing your interest and hobbies.
- Your clothing and personal appearance is dictated by my desires, because I feel you are a reflection of me.
- I am not aware of how I feel. I am aware of how you feel. I am not aware of what I want. I ask you what you want. If I am not aware, I assume.
- The dreams I have for my future are linked to you.
- My fear of rejection determines what I say and do.
- My fear of your anger determines what I say and do.
- I use giving as a way of feeling safe in our relationship.
- My social circle diminishes as I involve myself with you.
- I put my values aside in order to connect with you.
- I value your opinion and way of doing things more than my own.
- The quality of my life is in relation to the quality of yours.
like the beginning of a codependent relationship—where one person has allowed another person's behavior (abuse, chemical addiction, etc.) to affect him or her, and who is obsessed with controlling that person's behavior (Beattie 2001). It is natural to want to protect and help the people we care about. It is also natural to be affected by and react to the problems of people around us. As the problems become more serious and remain unresolved, we become more affected and react more intensely to it. Does this sound like anyone you know?

☐ Have you become so absorbed in other people’s problems that you do not have time to identify or solve your own?
☐ Do you care so deeply about other people that you have forgotten how to care for yourself?
☐ Do you need to control events and people around you because you feel everything around and inside you is out of control?
☐ Do you feel responsible for so much because the people around you feel responsible for so little?

ARE YOU CODEPENDENT? If you or any of your friends answer yes to the above questions, you may be codependent. Whatever problem the other person has, codependency involves a habitual system of thinking, feeling, and behaving toward ourselves and others that can cause us pain. Codependent behaviors or habits are self-destructive, not only to themselves, but also to all their relationships. Most codependents have been so busy responding to other people's problems that they have not had time to identify, much less take care, of their own problems.

Can a codependent change? Yes, definitely. But as we have already learned, change is not easy—it takes a lot of work and effort on everyone's part. The first step toward change is awareness of the problem, and the second step is acceptance. In order to become aware of what codependence is, we need to know what the characteristics of a codependent are.

Codependency is many things. It is a dependency on people—on their moods, behavior, sickness or well-being, and their love. It is a paradoxical dependency. Codependents appear to be depended upon, but they are dependent. They look strong but feel helpless. They appear controlling but in reality are controlled themselves, sometimes by a disorder or illness such as alcoholism. If you find yourself in a codependent relationship, you may want to read some of the new literature and self-help books available at your local bookstores or seek professional help through the counseling office or mental health center near you.

During the courtship period and continuing throughout married life, there is an insecure feeling in many individuals when they fear the loss of affection of their partner, especially when they feel threatened by an outside source. That outside source may be a new baby, a new friend, a new career, etc. Let us take another look at Walt and Sarah.

Walt has been working for a law firm for two years now and seems to be doing well. But the job is not as exciting as it originally was for the first two years. Walt is not considering changing jobs since he still knows that he could be a full partner within five years and that has been his goal for a long time.

On the other hand, Sarah just changed jobs and is extremely excited about the new challenges and the new friends she is getting to know.
Sarah is beginning to spend more and more time at work and more time socially with her new friends. Occasionally, she has been working late with a male colleague to complete a major project.

Walt comes home after work and Sarah’s still working. He is used to having her companionship in the evenings. Walt’s beginning to question Sarah about her late evenings and the fact she seems to be so happy recently and excited about life. He seems to be bored with his job and not too happy with the world around him. Walt’s becoming suspicious of Sarah and her friends. What’s happening in this relationship?

**What’s the Green-Eyed Monster?**

Is Walt jealous? *Jealousy* is an emotion familiar to most of us, if not from direct experience, at least through the experience of friends, from novels, television, and movies. *Romantic jealousy* carries the additional stress associated with the threat of losing an important relationship and often involves feelings of having been betrayed and perhaps deceived. Thus, this feeling of *romantic jealousy* provokes a host of negative feelings focused on the lover, the self, and the perceived rival. And it can be very destructive in relationships (Anderson 2003).

Gender differences characterize jealousy. Men tend to show strong feelings of sexual jealousy and are especially upset about sexual infidelity. This can motivate them to be very concerned about their partner’s faithfulness (Myers 2008). However, women are often more upset by their partner’s emotional infidelity (Buss 2007).

**IS IT JEALOUSY OR ENVY?** *Jealousy* is defined as the thoughts and feelings that arise when an actual or desired relationship is threatened. *Envy* is defined as the thoughts and feelings that arise when our personal qualities, possessions, or achievements do not measure up to those of someone relevant to us. In general, society is more accepting of jealousy than envy, understanding the desire to protect lovers from rivals but not the begrudging of a friend’s good fortune.

Researchers have suggested that jealousy and envy are rooted in a weak sense of self, low self-esteem or insecurities about self-worth (Marano 2006). People with poor self-concepts are more likely to fear that the existing relationship is vulnerable to threat. Jealousy is also more likely to occur when people believe they are putting more into a relationship than their partner is; they have serious doubts about their partner’s commitment. Men seem to respond differently to jealousy than women. Males seem less likely to admit they feel jealous but are more likely to express anger with themselves or toward the rival; females are more likely to react with depression and with attempts to make themselves more attractive to the partner (Buss 2003).

Overcoming jealousy is not easy. Anything we can do toward becoming confident, secure individuals will help us cope with our own jealousy. We can try to learn what is making us jealous. What exactly are we feeling and why are we feeling that way? We can try to keep our jealous feelings in perspective. We can also negotiate with our partner to change certain behaviors that seem to trigger our jealousy. Negotiations assume that we too are working to reduce our own unwarranted jealousy. Choosing partners who are reassuring and loving will also help reduce our irrational jealousies. Unfortunately,
it is not as easy as it sounds to follow this advice because jealousy is so often irrational, emotional, and unreasonable. Jealousy remains one of the puzzling components of love relationships (Santrock 2006).

During the last year of Walt’s and Sarah’s marriage, we find that Walt has been spending a lot of his spare time working on their computer, playing games, and learning new programs. Sarah does not like to spend her time playing with some “dumb” computer when she could be exercising or interacting with people. When they first got married, Walt and Sarah seemed to have a lot in common: tennis, history, same friends and same goals, but now they seem to be growing apart. Sarah has her new job and new friends and Walt does not seem to be interested in either. All he seems to be interested in is his computer and watching sports on television.

**Growing Apart**

Is there a point at which you have to admit that it is just not going to work, cut your losses, and walk away? In Relationship Rescue, Dr. Phil McGraw (2001) offers two major thoughts for consideration. First, do not ever make life-changing decisions in the midst of emotional turmoil. When feelings are running high and language and rhetoric even higher, this is not a time to make decisions that will affect your life and that of your partner and children, if any are involved. Never be in a hurry when making decisions, the consequences of which will be around for a long time. Second, if you are going to quit, you earn the right to quit. You don’t just get mad; you don’t just get your feelings hurt and decide to bail out. You earn the right to quit. Until you can look yourself in the eye in the mirror, until you can look your children in the eye and say I did everything I could to save this relationship and it could not be done, then you have not earned the right to quit.

When considering what it takes to make relationships work, it is useful to look at those who have tried and succeeded as well as those who have tried and failed. Research shows that a few crucial compatibilities make the difference between making up and breaking up. See Consider this—Making Up versus Breaking Up.

**WHO DIVORCES?** While it is true that there has been a decline in divorce rates since the 1970s, the prevailing estimate is somewhere between 40 percent and 50 percent of marriages entered into in a year are likely to become divorces (Strong et al. 2007). The vast majority of divorces occur within the first decade, with years seven to ten being somewhat higher. First marriages that end in divorce last a median of about eight years (U.S. Census Bureau 2008).

Divorce rates are higher among blacks than whites or Hispanics, among lower-income couples, among couples who cohabitated, among couples who do not have children, among people who marry at a relatively young age, and among those whose parents divorced (Faust and McKibben 1999; Rodrigues et al. 2006). In addition, divorce rates in the United States are higher than rates elsewhere in the industrialized world (Strong 2007).

**WHAT KIND OF SPECIFIC MARITAL PROBLEMS ARE PREDICTIVE OF DIVORCE?** Amato and Previti (2003) found that communication problems, sexual infidelity, jealousy, foolish spending, and drug problems were the most consistent predictors of divorce.
**Consider this . . .**

**Making Up versus Breaking Up**

Pepper Schwartz (2002), professor of sociology at the University of Washington, analyzed data from the Enrich Couple Inventory involving questions administered to 21,501 couples throughout the country. The researchers compared the answers of the happiest couples to those of the most unhappy and found that the differences between their answers to a few key questions tell a lot about what makes relationships work:

**My partner is a very good listener**
Unhappy couples 18% Happy couples 83%

**My partner does not understand how I feel**
Unhappy couples 79% Happy couples 13%

**We have a good balance of leisure time spent together and separately**
Unhappy couples 17% Happy couples 71%

**We find it easy to think of things to do together**
Unhappy couples 28% Happy couples 86%

**I am very satisfied with how we talk to each other**
Unhappy couples 15% Happy couples 90%

**We are creative in how we handle our differences**
Unhappy couples 15% Happy couples 78%

**Making financial decisions is not difficult**
Unhappy couples 32% Happy couples 80%

**Our sexual relationship is satisfying and fulfilling**
Unhappy couples 29% Happy couples 85%

**We are both equally willing to make adjustments in the relationship**
Unhappy couples 46% Happy couples 87%

**I can share feelings and ideas with my partner during disagreements**
Unhappy couples 22% Happy couples 85%

**My partner understands my opinions and ideas**
Unhappy couples 19% Happy couples 87%

What do you think about these findings?

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Your marriage will have a greater chance of lasting if:

- You marry after the age of 22;
- You grow-up in a stable, two parent home;
- You dated for a long time prior to marriage;
- You are well and similarly educated;
- You have a stable income from a job you enjoy;
- You do not cohabit or become pregnant before marriage;
- You are religiously committed;
- You are of similar age, faith, and education.
Recipe for Marriage

Start with two stable people, 1 lb. of love, and a gallon of commitment. Then add 1 cup of each: trust, communication, respect, and patience. Mix well and remove any traces of temper, selfishness, and criticism.

Now add 3 tbs. pure extract of sincere apology, 1 cup of cooperation, 1 cup of encouragement, and 1 cup of consideration.

Place in a home. Make sure to allow room for children and pets.

Season lightly with a dash of in-laws. Sweeten with memories, shared activities, laughter, and tokens of affection.

Serve with faith and devotion and enjoy.

None of these predictors, by themselves, is essential to a stable marriage, but the more you have, the greater the chance the marriage will last.

Today, marriage partners have a much more flexible view of marriage roles and responsibilities and are likely to expect each other to be a friend, lover, and confidant, as well as wage-earner and care-giver.

Walt and Sarah have been married for eight years now. Walt believes in the “traditional” type of marriage, where there are male and female roles. Sarah believes in the “equalitarian” type marriage, where the responsibilities are shared equally. As you can see, there is beginning to be a lot of conflict within this relationship. Walt and Sarah no longer seem to have much in common. Sarah has tried to talk to Walt about their problems, but Walt does not want to talk about it. He thinks everything is “OK.” She’s just a complainer.

Sarah decides that it is not worth trying anymore and files for divorce. Walt gets very upset and feels depressed because he feels that they can save the marriage. He says he will do anything to keep the relationship together, but Sarah says it is too late. Can this marriage be saved?

THE IMPACT OF DIVORCE. The dissolution of a marriage tends to be a very emotional and traumatic event for most people. Divorced men suffer primarily from loss of emotional support and disrupted social ties to friends and relatives and sometimes even children (Belsky 2007). In comparison, divorced women suffer most from reduced income.

Men and women differ in how they cope with a failed relationship: women tend to confide in their friends, whereas men tend to start a new relationship as quickly as possible. Some individuals appear to adapt in the early stages of divorce, but show effects later (Hetherington et al. 1998). It takes most people two to three years to recover fully from the distress of a divorce, and some have more difficulty than others (Lucas 2005).

Table 6.1 indicates the steps many people experience as they go through the divorce process.

For some, divorce can be enhancing. In a healthy divorce, ex-spouses must accomplish three tasks: let go, develop new social ties, and when children are involved, redefine parental roles (Everett and Everett 1998).

The first emotional impact of divorce is often that the former spouses become even more angry and more bitter with each other than they were in relationships. Seldom die because they suddenly have no life left in them; they wither slowly, either because people do not understand how much or what kind of upkeep, time, work, love, and caring they require or because people are too lazy or afraid to try. A relationship is a living thing. It needs and benefits from the same attention to detail that an artist lavishes on his art.

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the marriage. This increased hostility is often followed by and interspersed with periods of depression, disequilibrium, altered patterns of eating and sleeping, drug and alcohol use, along with work and residence change (Kelly 2004). It is most likely to be the wife who first finds fault with the marriage and files for divorce. In fact, many men are surprised and shocked by the break up, and in the short term, divorce is more devastating to the man than the woman. Over the long term, however, women are more affected, primarily because they are likely to have less money and fewer marriage prospects than divorced men. If they are mothers with custody, the impact of divorce is particularly strong. (Duffy and Atwater 2008).

**WHAT ABOUT THE CHILDREN?** Divorce may have more of an impact on the children than anyone else. The children have no control in this relationship; they are helpless in this situation. Whatever the kids say or do will not benefit the situation. Generally, no one will listen anyway. Evidence suggests that in the long run it is less damaging to the children if unhappy parents divorce than if the children grow up intact but in a dissension-ridden home (Booth and Amato 2001).

In *For Better or For Worse: Divorce Reconsidered*, E. Mavis Hetherington (2001), a psychology professor emeritus at the University of Virginia, tracked nearly 1,400 families and more than 2,500 children, some for three decades. Hetherington found that 75 to 80 percent of children of divorce are functioning well, with little long-term damage to their adult lives. She further declared that 25 percent of children from divorced families have social, emotional or psychological problems, as opposed to 10 percent of kids from intact families. The children's recovery and subsequent adjustment seem to depend primarily on the quality of their relationship with the custodial parent and how well the custodial parent is adjusting to the divorce (Amato 2001 and De Buer 2001). For some children, the effects of divorce tend to show up more as the children reach maturity and struggle to form their own adult relationships.

### Table 6.1 Steps in Divorce Grief

- **Relief**—Moment of no more fussing.
- **Shock and surprise**—I can’t believe this is happening to me.
- **Emotional release**—How much should I let people see my feelings and how long will I keep crying?
- **Physical distress and anxiety**—Will I lose my friends?
- **Panic**—There is something wrong with me; I cannot eat or I eat all the time.
- **Guilt**—Two basic emotions in divorce:
  - a. guilt—What did I do wrong?
  - b. rejection—I am not capable of being loved.
- **Hostility and projection**—I know we are both angry but we are going to end this divorce in a friendly manner.
- **Lassitude**—Suffering in silence, hard to get anything done.
- **Healing**—Gradual overcoming of grief and getting on with reality.

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How does divorce affect the children?
REMARRIAGE. Between 70 and 80 percent of divorced people remarry, on the average, within three to four years of being divorced (men tend to marry sooner than woman after a divorce). Remarriage is more likely to occur if the divorced person is relatively young, since there seems to be more potential partners still available. There is no guarantee that marriage will be better the second time around; the divorce rate for remarriages is higher than that for first marriages. However, the average duration for second marriages is about the same as for first, about eight to nine years (Kreider 2005). It may be that some lonely, divorced people marry—too quickly—as they say—“on the rebound.” Stepchildren can also be a disruptive factor.

BLENDEN FAMILIES. An increasing number of remarriages now involve children. Remarriages involving children pose special demands on both the adults as well as the children. In addition to learning how to live with one new person, which can be difficult enough for most people, one or both partners must also become accustomed to a ready-made family. When the children are young, the stepparent has more opportunity to develop rapport and trust with the children. But when there are adolescents involved, it is more difficult for everyone involved. Both parents must make allowances for their stepchildren's initial suspiciousness, jealousy, and resistance. When both parents develop a good working relationship, talking things out and cooperating on discipline and household chores, the blended family may do at least as well as intact families.

As we have previously noted, the traditional model of marriage has been undermined by many different changes within our culture. More and more people are selecting alternatives to marriage. Earlier in the chapter we discussed two alternatives, single life and cohabitation. Another alternative should be discussed.

GAY/LESBIAN RELATIONSHIPS. Statistics indicate that there may be as many as twenty-five million gay/lesbian people in the United States. Roughly 2 percent of the women and 4–5 percent of the men are exclusively homosexual (Laumann et al. 2000).

The dynamics of a gay/lesbian relationship do not seem to be any different than those in a heterosexual relationship. They are similar in terms of the forces that bring couples together, the factors that predict satisfaction with the relationship, and the problems couples face (Weiten and Lloyd 2009).

The major problem that most gays/lesbians encounter is the negative attitude about homosexuality in our society—especially now with people's attitude about AIDS. Most homosexual men and nearly all homosexual women prefer stable, long-term relationships. Promiscuity among gay men is clearly on the decline. Lesbian relationships are generally sexually exclusive. Gay/lesbian relationships are characterized by great diversity. It is not true that gays/lesbians always assume traditional masculine and feminine roles. Both gays/lesbians and heterosexual cohabitants may face opposition to their relationship from their families, and from society in general, and neither universally enjoys the legal and social sanctions of marriage.
Chapter Review

We are motivated not only to seek the company of others, but to form close and lasting relationships. The relationships you have are your greatest assets.

- Relationships evolve, they do not just happen. They take time and effort.
- The three steps involved in a relationship are:
  1. Becoming aware of the other person—first impression;
  2. Making contact or getting acquainted;
  3. Disclosure.
- Friends play a significant role in our lives. They provide us with emotional support and social ties. Without friends we experience loneliness.
- We are drawn to people who are similar to us. Research studies have found that similar beliefs and attitudes are the most important aspects of a relationship in order to keep a relationship together over a long period of time.
- In order to find friends, you must go to those places (proximity) where you will find other people who have similar interests and needs.
- The repulsion hypothesis indicates that many of us are repulsed by people whom we do not know, and we perceive them as dissimilar to us.
- People with complementary needs tend to be drawn to each other—personality fit.
- The social exchange theory states that we measure our actions and relationships on a cost-benefit basis. People maximize their rewards and minimize their costs by employing their resources, either tangible or intangible, to gain the most favorable outcome.
- We tend to like people who like us—reciprocity.
- During the last decade, online matchmaking sites have evolved as a huge industry.
- The most important factors people want in marital selection in China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Taiwan, and the Palestinian Arab culture is chastity. People from the Zulu culture in South Africa, Estonia, and Columbia placed a high value on housekeeping skills.
- Both men and women want a mate who possesses qualities of mutual attraction/love, dependable character, and emotional stability/maturity, respectively the highest.
- Men prefer wives who are younger than they are. Women prefer husbands who are somewhat older—but there is an increase in women seeking younger dates and mates.
- Love is complex and confusing. Everyone thinks they know what love is.
- Harry Stack Sullivan has given us an excellent definition of love—“When the satisfaction, security, and development of another person is as important to you as your own satisfaction, security, and development, love exists.”
- Robert Sternberg has developed a theory of love that includes three components: passion—an intense physiological desire for another person; intimacy—the feeling that one can share all one’s thoughts and actions with another; commitment—the willingness to stay with a person through thick and thin, etc.
- Cultural factors have a strong influence on the value of love. Romantic love is more likely to be considered an important basis for marriage in individualistic societies than in collectivistic ones.
- According to Sternberg, there are at least seven types of love relationships: liking, romantic, companionate, consummation, infatuation, empty, and fatuous.
- Psychological reactance is the tendency to protect or restore one’s sense of freedom or social control, often doing the opposite of what has been demanded. This is also known as the Romeo and Juliet effect.
- Although alternatives to marriage are more viable than ever, over ninety percent of us will marry at least once. Individuals are waiting longer to get married.
- Cohabitation has become increasingly more common throughout the world. Couples who do decide to cohabit are at a higher risk of divorce than couples who do not.
Most research indicates that the most important reasons to make a marriage last are: be your spouse’s best friend, having similar beliefs, values and attitudes, exhibit a high degree of flexibility, having a positive attitude toward one’s partner, and a couple needs to learn to adjust and compromise.

The more two partners agree about marital roles, the more likely the marriage will last over a longer period of time. It is imperative that couples discuss role expectations in depth before marriage.

Dr. Gary Chapman indicates there are five love languages: words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service, and physical touch.

Successful communication is the cornerstone of any relationship. Such communication must be open, realistic, tactful, caring, and valued. Physical violence is most apt to erupt in families lacking communication skills.

John Gottman’s research indicates that most relationships will be successful as long as the couple maintain the five-to-one ratio of positive responses to negative responses. Gottman also feels that some negative emotions used in arguments are more toxic than others: criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling.

A codependent relationship is where one person has allowed another person’s behavior (abuse, chemical addiction, etc.) to affect him or her, and is obsessed with controlling that person’s behavior.

Jealousy is defined as the thoughts and feelings that arise when an actual or desired relationship is threatened, and envy as the thoughts and feelings that arise when our personal qualities, possessions, or achievements do not measure up to those of someone relevant to us.

Divorce is much more common than it was twenty years ago. It can have a devastating effect on the individuals involved, including the children. Between 70 and 80 percent of all divorced people will remarry.

Statistics indicate that roughly two percent of all women and four to five percent of the men in the United States are homosexual.

**Test Review Questions: Learning Outcomes**

1. Discuss what is involved in the three steps in the development of a relationship.
2. What are the qualities of a good friend?
3. Explain the importance of similarities, proximity, complementarity, social exchange theory, and reciprocity in the development of friendships.
4. What are the mate preferences shared by men and women?
5. Discuss the effective strategies for meeting dates and mates.
6. Discuss the difference between love and infatuation.
7. Describe Sternberg’s theory of love.
8. Explain the seven types of love described in Sternberg’s model.
9. Explain the phenomenon known as psychological reactance (the Romeo and Juliet effect).
10. Describe the positive and negative aspects of cohabitation.
11. What makes a happy and successful marriage?
12. Discuss Dr. Gary Chapman’s Five Love Languages.
13. What do most couples argue about? Why?
14. Explain the five-to-one ratio. Why?
15. Explain the four negative emotions John Gottman feels are more toxic than others.
16. What is a codependent relationship?
17. Describe the difference between jealousy and envy.
18. Explain the impact of divorce on the individuals involved, including children.
19. Describe the steps in divorce grief.
20. Discuss how role expectancies influences a relationship.
Key Terms

Blended Families  Five-to-one ratio  Parenthood
Codependent  Friend  Passion
Cohabitation  Gay Relationships  Psychological Reactance
Commitment  Honeymoon Period  Reciprocity
Communication  Infatuation  Remarriage
Companionate Love  Intimacy  Repulsion Hypothesis
Complementary Needs  Jealousy  Role Expectation
Confidant  Liking  Romantic Love
Consummate Love  Living Together  Romeo and Juliet Effect
Divorce  Loneliness (LTL)  Similarities
Empty Love  Love  Singlehood
Envy  Lust  Social Exchange Theory
Fatuous Love  Marriage

Reflections

1. Why do we need friends?
2. What is your definition of a good friend? Explain what a good friend is.
3. If you knew someone who was new to town, what would you recommend they do to find new friends?
4. Friendships satisfy needs. Study three relationships (friendships) that you currently have. What needs are they satisfying for you? Explain.
5. How have you used the social exchange theory in your relationships?
6. What is your definition of love? How do you know when you are in love?
7. What are the pros and cons of cohabitation vs. marriage? Explain.
8. What are your experiences with jealousy? How should a person deal with a jealous lover?
9. Explain the role of the male and the role of the female in a married relationship. Are these roles different from how your parents viewed the role within their marriage? Explain.
10. What direct or indirect impact has divorce had on your life?
11. Explain codependence. Have you ever been in a codependent relationship? Discuss the relationship and explain how you could change the situation.
12. Which of the “Five Love Languages” is most important to you?

Web Resources

www.gottman.com
Numerous articles related to Gottman’s extensive research on making marriage work.

http://www.marriagebuilders.com/
Insightful answers to questions about infidelity, marriage counseling, and divorce.

http://hughson.com/
Named one of the top 5 percent Web sites, this is an address for individuals contemplating or involved in a divorce.

http://marriage.about.com/cs/communicationkeys/a/lovelanguage.htm
Discussion of five love languages.
Roles and Expectations

Purpose: To discover the roles and expectations people have of themselves and other people in specific categories such as a spouse, parent, student, breadwinner, male, and female.

Instructions:

I. Select one of the three alternatives:
   1. Ask four to five married students (preferably, not from the class) to be on a panel. Have the students ask questions regarding roles and expectations in a marriage.
   2. Divide into groups of approximately six individuals (three females and three males would be ideal).
   3. Each student interviews six or more individuals, from different careers, from different socio-economic income levels, and/or different ethnic groups.

II. Discuss the following:
   The class may want to create their own questions or ask the questions listed below and then answer the discussion questions.
   1. What career have each of you chosen for yourself? What type of career is selected by the females; by the males? Are the careers sex-role oriented?
   2. What roles do you expect to play at home? Specify the tasks you are willing or not willing to do.
   3. What role will you take as a parent (full-time parent, half-time, change diapers, and so on).
   4. What role will you take as a breadwinner?

Discussion

1. Do you see evidence that today’s college students subscribe to traditional sex roles or that they are free of such barriers to independent choice? Give examples.

2. What messages did you receive as you were growing up regarding specific expectations or behaviors appropriate to your gender?

3. How do you feel that your life would be different, if at all, if you were a member of the opposite sex? (Imagine, when you wake up tomorrow morning, you are the opposite sex.) What would you do? How would you act? Would others relate to you differently? What would your expectations of yourself be? How would they change?
Are You Compatible?

**Purpose:** To discover whether you and your prospective mate or date are compatible.

**Instructions:** Answer the following questions with the appropriate number.

1 = Strongly agree  
2 = Agree  
3 = Neither agree or disagree  
4 = Disagree  
5 = Strongly disagree

1. We have similar religious beliefs and values. _______
2. We enjoy the same type of leisure activities. _______
3. We like each other’s friends. _______
4. We enjoy each other’s sense of humor. _______
5. We like to be with each other as much as we can. _______
6. We are willing to share whatever we have with each other. _______
7. We share our thoughts and feelings about even the most private topics. _______
8. We have similar political values and beliefs. _______
9. We are willing to listen to each other’s problems and help resolve each other’s problems. _______
10. We tend to agree on how to spend money and how to save money. _______
11. We support our partner’s interest and activities even if they differ from our own. _______
12. Our personal lives, work schedules, sleep habits, outside interests and activities, fit together harmoniously. _______
13. We work well together in making decisions. _______
14. We are able to resolve conflict situations without getting too emotional or aggressive toward one another. _______
15. Our efforts to work out differences usually bring us closer together. _______
16. We desire the same level of openness. _______
17. We are able to work out a division of tasks and who is responsible for specific responsibilities. _______
18. We are both neat or disorderly, etc. _______
19. We enjoy the same type of vacations and travel. _______
20. We share pleasant feelings and unpleasant feelings about each other and our relationship. _______

**Scoring:** Add up your total score. The higher the score the less compatible you seem to be: between 60–80. The lower the score the more compatible you seem to be: between 20–40.

(continued)
After you have completed the rating scale, answer the following questions:

1. Why is it important to have a lot in common with your mate?

2. How can you improve your relationship with your mate to make your relationship more compatible?

3. Do you think that two people who score high on this test could still be compatible? Explain.
Mate Selection

**Purpose:** To identify the characteristics that are most important to you in selecting the person you wish to date or marry.

**Instructions:**

I. Rate each of the following factors according to their importance to you in selecting the person you would wish to marry (#1 = most important characteristic, #18 = least important characteristic).

- Intelligence
- Emotional stability and maturity
- Good financial prospects
- Similar educational background
- Sociability (friendly)
- Similar religious background
- Desire for children
- Refinement
- Mutual love and attraction
- Good looks
- Ambition and industriousness
- Dependable character
- Good health
- Similar political backgrounds
- Pleasing disposition
- Neatness
- Chastity
- Favorable social status or rating

II. List characteristics according to importance to you.

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 
9. 
10. 
11. 
12. 
13. 
14. 
15. 
16. 
17. 
18.

III. Divide into groups of three to four people. Discuss the following questions.

1. How do the top four characteristics on your list differ from the other members of your group? Explain.

2. Discuss why you think your top four characteristics are so important to you.

(continued)
3. Do you think the importance of these characteristics would be different in different cultures or different socio-economic income levels?

4. After discussing these characteristics with the group, would you change the order of your list? Why or why not?
Name __________________________________________ Date ________________________

Rate-A-Mate

**Purpose:** To discover what is important to you and others in selecting a partner. What is important to you in selecting a prospective partner? What is important for other individuals in selecting a partner? How do you think people from other cultures would respond to this survey?

**Instructions:**

1. Take the survey individually to see what is important to you in a prospective partner. (Make a copy before you complete the survey.)
2. Give the survey to one of your parents, or someone at least twenty years older than you.
3. As a group or individually, you may want to select individuals from other cultures or different socio-economic groups, or both.
4. If you are involved in a relationship presently, give this survey to your partner.
5. Take the survey again, but this time, circle the number as you see it relating to you. For example, give yourself a 4 if you feel your health is excellent, a 1 if you are not a good cook or housekeeper, etc.

Circle the number indicating the importance to you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>INDISPENSABLE OR EXTREMELY IMPORTANT</th>
<th>VERY HIGHLY DESIRED</th>
<th>DESIRED, BUT NOT TERRIBLY IMPORTANT</th>
<th>IRRELEVANT OR UNIMPORTANT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good health</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good cook and housekeeper</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasing disposition</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependable character</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional stability</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for home and children</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refinement</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good financial prospect</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similar political background</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambitious and industriousness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chastity—No sexual intercourse before marriage</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociable (friendly)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favorable social status</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual interests</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similar educational background</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complementarity</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scoring:** Add up your total score. If your score is within 15 points of another individual that took the survey there is a high probability that you will get along well. But, the important aspect to consider is that your score on each individual value is similar to the individuals who are important to you.

(continued)
Discussion

1. How important is it for partners to have similar values? Can a couple be compatible with many dissimilar values?

2. Are your values different from a person twenty years older than you? What are the differences? Why do you think they have different values?

3. How do your values differ with people from different cultures and different socio-economic groups? Explain.

4. Do you think it should be important to have a partner whose score is similar to your score as you took the survey the second time (as #5 in the instructions stated)? Explain.

5. What did you learn from this experience?
Divorce Panel

**Purpose:** To develop an understanding of some key issues to consider when divorce involves children.

**Instructions:**
1. Use class members who are from divorced families as the panel members.
2. Assume the remaining members of the class are all married with children. However, some have already filed for divorce, and some are considering divorce.
3. Therefore, what advice/wisdom from experience would the panel members give to the following questions?

**Questions for Panel Members:**
1. What general advice would you suggest in dealing with the children?

2. Should parents stay together for the kids? Why or why not?

3. Did the divorce of your parents have any impact on your personal views of marriage? If so, please explain.

4. Did the divorce have any impact on your dating relationships? If so, please explain.

5. As you think of important events in your life, weddings, for example, how will the divorce impact that event in your life?

6. Did any of you feel that you lost a parent as a result of the divorce? Why or why not?

(continued)
7. Did any of you feel that you gained a parent figure as a result of a step-parent relationship? Please explain, if possible.

8. Did your relationship with your biological mother or father change as a result of having gained a step-parent?

Discussion
1. What is the reaction from the class members to the Divorce Panel experience?
Why People Get Divorced—Why People Get Married

Purpose:
■ To better understand why people divorce and what it requires to choose to remain married.
■ To get a better understanding of why people stay married.
■ To discover if unmarried individuals perceive the reasons for divorce differently than divorced individuals.
■ To discover whether unmarried, married, and divorced individuals have similar perceptions of why people stay married.

Instructions:
I. Interview four to six people who have been divorced, four to six people who have never been married, and four to six people who are married to find out why they feel divorce generally occurs. (You may want to use the form available at the end of this activity.)
II. Ask them what they would consider the major reason (in order of importance) for the high divorce rate in this country. (Ask the divorced individuals to make this judgment based on their own experiences.)
III. Ask them what they would consider the major reasons (in order of importance) for staying married.
IV. Divide into small groups or have a large class discussion.

Discussion
1. Do any individuals consider unrealistic romantic expectations to be a contributing factor for getting divorced? If so, what are they?

2. Do the divorced and the never-married people respond differently? If so, how would you characterize these differences? If not, why do you think people agree on the basic causes even when they have had very different experiences?
3. What seems to be the major reasons for divorce?

4. What seems to be the major reasons for staying married?

5. What could we do to prevent the high number of divorces in our society?

6. Did the exercise stimulate your thinking about yourself, your interpersonal style, and your relationships to your fellow group members? Why or why not?
Name ___________________________ Date __________________

Marital Status ___________________________ Age __________________

1. What would you consider the major reasons are for the high divorce rate in this country? (List in order of importance) Note: Divorced individuals will need to make this judgment based on their own experiences.

2. What would you consider the major reasons are for staying married? (In order of importance)

3. What do you think could be done to decrease the divorce rate in the United States?
Developing Close Relationships

Learning Journal

Select the statement below that best defines your feelings about the personal value or meaning gained from this chapter and respond below the dotted line.

☐ I learned that I . . .
☐ I was surprised that I . . .
☐ I realized that I . . .
☐ I was pleased that I . . .
☐ I discovered that I . . .
☐ I was displeased that I . . .