



# How to create a thriving relationship

## Teacher Stress

Teachers - the highest levels of occupational stress in Australia, UK & USA

Principals – 67% feel their families and partners suffer due to the lack of time and energy they have for them

Principals - more than a third believe their work is affecting their ability to maintain ongoing relationships

## Spill-over effect

“Experiences in one life domain are transferred to another domain”

Spill-over effects from marriage/relationship problems to work and vice versa are real and costly in terms of human and economic capital

An unhappy relationship can increase your chances of getting sick by 35% and can even shorten your life by 4-8 years!

Regardless of relationship status, sexuality, age or gender, it's a **universal human desire to connect in meaningful ways** to another person...but it's not always easy!

## Drs John and Julie Gottman

Studied 3000+ couples for 40+ years including gay couples for 12+ years

After 15 minutes, could predict with 90% accuracy if a couple will divorce

Julie encouraged John to *help* people, so they created a theory of **relationship success**

No such thing as a perfect relationship but many evidence-based strategies you can adopt NOW to strengthen ALL your relationships – **with partner, friends, colleagues, children, and even your students**

Email: [sabinaread100@gmail.com](mailto:sabinaread100@gmail.com)

Web: [sabinareadpsychology.com](http://sabinareadpsychology.com)

Twitter: @ReadSabina

Instagram: sabinaread

## Masters

Show **interest** in partner's world

Prioritise **friendship** with partner

**Respond** to partner's attempts to bid for connection 86% of the time

**Avoid criticism/blame** & focus on own needs

Maintain a **5:1** positive to negative ratio with respect, kindness, affection & humour

Habitually **scan for what partner is doing well**

Have the ability to **repair** after conflict/hurt

*"I'm sorry" "That didn't go well did it?"*

## Disasters

**Critical** of partner

**Diagnose** partner's "defects"

**Defensive** & emotionally withdrawn

Act with **contempt** & superiority

Respond to **bids 33%** of the time

Maintain **.8:1** positive to negative ratio

## Unhealthy Behaviours: "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse"

Criticism – Personal attack on partner not their behaviour

*"you never..." "you don't..." "you always..."*

Defensiveness – counter attack to criticism which infers partner at fault

*"yes, but you never..." "if you hadn't..."*

Contempt – superior attitude, eye rolling, sarcasm, ridicule...

*"you're so stupid" "of course you would think that"*

Stonewalling – emotional withdrawal from relationship

*"sure, whatever" "I can't do this anymore"*

## The Sound Relationship House

### 1. Build Love Maps = Friendship

Get to know each other's worlds

Show regular interest in each other

***Can you name your partner's two closest friends?***

***What was your partner's best childhood experience?***

***What would be an ideal job for your partner?***

***What is your partner currently most sad about?***

A deep understanding of each other can help when the relationship is put under pressure (e.g. job loss, illness, retirement, empty-nest)

### 2. Share Fondness and Admiration

Create a new habit of mind--Scan the environment for things your partner does well and tell them...

***"Thanks for doing the dishes"***

***"Thanks for supporting me when I talked about my students"***

***"Thanks for making me feel like I come first in your life"***

***"The way you treat my family means a lot to me"***

***"Thanks for taking the kids to netball"***

***"Thanks for saving money for us"***

### 3. Turn towards each other

We are repeatedly seeking each other's attention – for support, affection or validation

**Bids can include:**

**Sighing**

**Touch**

***"Look at the sunset!"***

***"I wonder why sweet potato is a healthier option than potato?"***

**We can turn away, turn against, or turn towards each other's bids**

**Make regular deposits into your emotional bank account by turning towards**

#### 4. The Positive Perspective

##### **How you view relationship in the past predicts the future**

“The Story of Us” – positive or negative?

Avoid score keeping

Masters glorify their struggle rather than lamenting and focusing on disagreements “we made it through...”

#### 5. Manage Conflict

**69% of issues are unresolvable –**

**It’s the way we talk about these issues that matters most**

When we choose a partner, we choose a set of problems!!

Practicing repair after conflict is crucial

Take a **20 minute break** to self-soothe during conflict then...commit to returning with a more peaceful mindset

#### 6. Make Life Dreams Come True

Understand each other’s dreams

***“What do you want your life to be like in three years?”***

***“How do you see your work changing in the future?”***

***“How would you compare yourself as a mother/father to your own mother/father?”***

#### 7. Create Share Meaning

Compatibility is over-rated

Unity is more important than what you have in common – a sense of “we-ness”

Rituals are important - which do you value & how do you want to practice them:

Holidays

Bringing friends into the home

Meals times

Celebrating successes

Bedtime

Saying good bye in the mornings

Reunions at the end of the day

## Six evidence-based strategies to practice today!

### 1. Be a needs detective

Behind every criticism or complaint is an unmet need

Ask “what do you need from me right now?”

Express needs rather than blame... “**I**m feeling unimportant” vs “**you** always talk about yourself”

### 2. Support each other with a daily “stress-reducing” conversation

Spend 20-30 minutes talking about the stresses of the day – **don’t discuss relationship**

Helps to manage external work stresses not caused by your relationship and creates support

Avoid problem solving or trying to lift partner’s mood – listen without judgement or a solution

### 3. Practice small things often

Dates nights

Small acts of kindness and thoughtfulness

Check in with your partner even when you’re tired

CHOOSE to respond to your partner’s bids – even when you don’t feel like it

### 4. Continue to be curious about your partner

Each morning, ask about one thing he/she will be doing during the day ahead

Self-disclosure and vulnerability can help create intimacy

Curiosity is relationship gold

### 5. Practice gratitude for your partner

Text your partner one thing you appreciate about each other every day – *be specific*

*“Thank you for going to Ikea to buy the new glasses I wanted”*

*“I appreciate it when you kiss me good-night”*

*“Thanks for making me laugh”*

### 6. Practice daily touch and affection

Give each other a **6 second kiss** when you depart and greet each other every day: COUNT 1...2...3...4...5...6...☺

Share a 20 second hug at the end of each day

Touch *every* time you see each other!

Is the grass really greener elsewhere? Nope...The grass is greener where you water it!