



Healthy Relationships

1. **Friendship:** Couples who have a strong friendship have staying power. They not only love each other but genuinely like each other as people. They enjoy hanging out together. They might even consider each other their *best friend*.
2. **Communication:** As obvious as this may seem, many couples are not very good at it. Those who are able to openly express their feelings in an emotionally safe environment typically deal with situations as they come up and avoid burying frustrations that always have a way of coming out at some point.
3. **Chore Sharing:** Those who divide up the household or parenting responsibilities in a way that is mutually agreed upon are less likely to hold resentments about what they perceive as *unfairness*. Each participates (albeit maybe begrudgingly), and both contribute to the relationship in this way.
4. **Sexual Intimacy:** Couples who have their sexual needs met or at least have negotiated a reasonable compromise if their levels of need aren't compatible, feel taken care of by the other. Some are highly active, engaging in lovemaking multiple times a week, and others are content with much less.
5. **Affection:** Partners who stay in physical contact in some way throughout the day appear to be the happiest ones. These moments don't need to necessarily lead to sexual intimacy but are rather easy ways to say, *I love you* without the words. These moments can be invaluable, especially these days when everyone seems to be racing around to get *somewhere*. Whether it's a hug, kiss, swat on the rear, tussle of the hair, or sitting on the lap, these acts of affection keep couples connected when life gets crazy.
6. **No Horsemen of the Apocalypse:** This is a term coined by famous couples researcher John Gottman, who claims to be able to predict divorce with incredible accuracy. His *four horsemen of the apocalypse* are criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling. His research has shown that couples that demonstrate a high level of these in their relationship are in big trouble.

7. **Mutual and Separate Friends:** Partners who socialize with other couples and also maintain separate friendships have greater balance in regard to honoring themselves as individuals within the relationship. This leads to more self-satisfaction, which translates to relationship satisfaction.
8. **Reliability:** Most of us want follow-through with our friendships and our partners. If couples do what they say and say what they do, they create an atmosphere of comfort in knowing their words mean something to the other.
9. **Relationship Vision:** It's interesting the number of couples I've seen who don't seem to have the big picture of their relationship in mind. Where do they see themselves in ten years? What are their relationship goals? Couples who have created a relationship vision for themselves know where they're going as they've planned it together. They get joy out of reaching for their goals as a team and are less likely to be derailed by surprises.