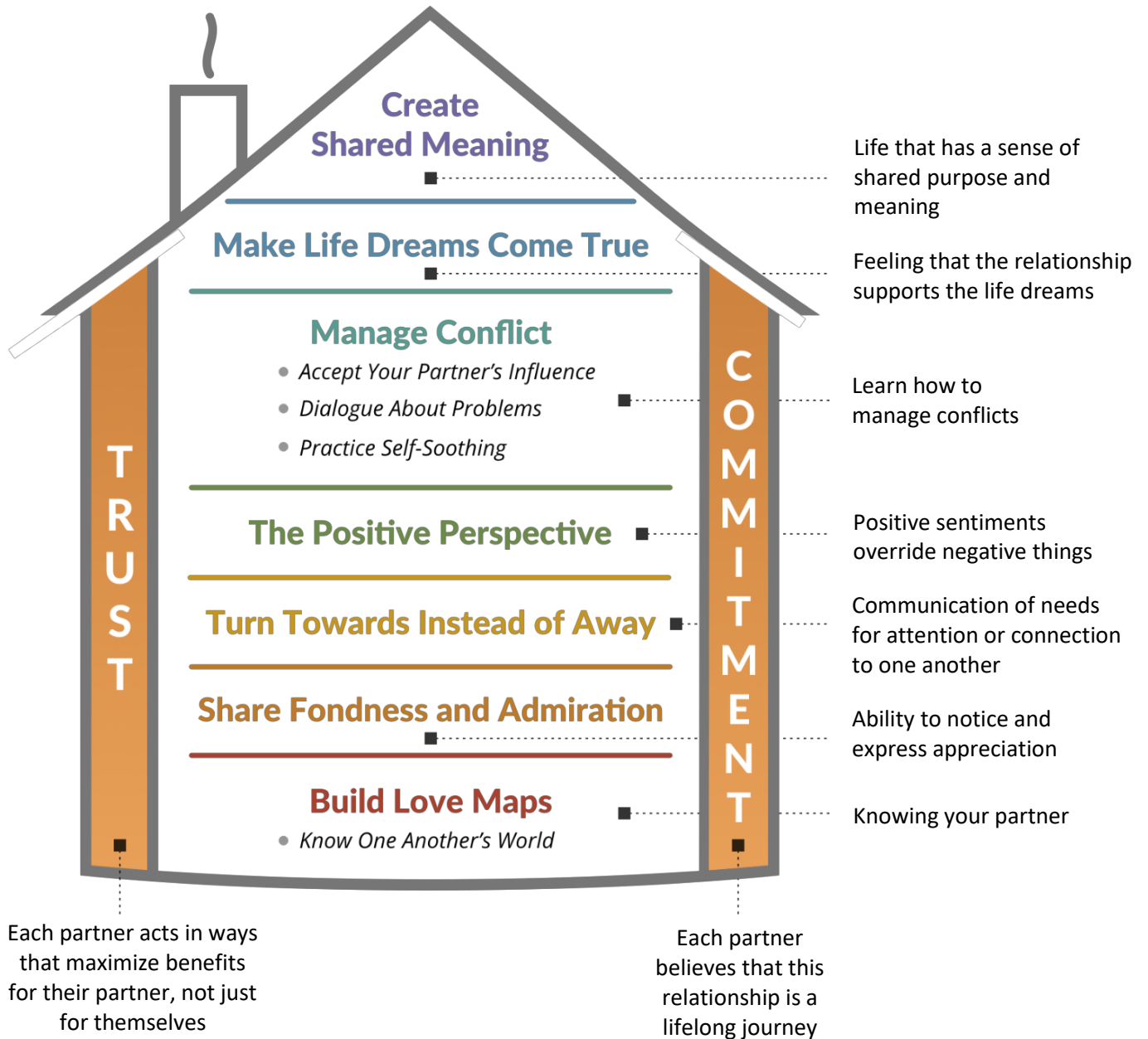


The Sound Relationship House



Our Analysis – Your Sound Relationship House

1. BUILD LOVE MAPS

✓ STRENGTH



The most basic level of friendship, Love Maps refers to knowing your partner and feeling known by him or her. It is the road map you create in your mind of your partner's inner world that includes thoughts, feelings, hopes, aspirations, dreams, values, and goals. Love Maps are built by asking open-ended questions and remembering the answers.

2. SHARE FONDNESS AND ADMIRATION

⚠ CHALLENGE



This level describes partners' ability to notice and express what they appreciate about each other. To build a culture of respect, partners catch their partner doing something right and convey appreciation, respect and affection verbally and nonverbally.

Fondness and admiration is built with a positive habit of mind in which you ignore your partner's mistakes and instead notice your partner's positive contributions to the relationship. Both Partners need to actively express appreciation, fondness, affection, and respect.

3. TURN TOWARD BIDS

✓ STRENGTH



When couples were simply "hanging out" together (in the Apartment Lab research study), they often verbally or non-verbally communicated their needs for attention or connection to one another. We call this making a bid for connection.

When a bid for connection has been made, the other partner can either turn towards the bid by responding positively to it, turn away from the bid by ignoring their partner, or turn against the bid by verbally attacking their partner for making the bid. When partners turn towards each other's bids for connection it's like putting money in an emotional bank account that gets built up over time. There is a hierarchy of bidding, from asking for and getting the partner's attention to asking for and receiving the partner's empathy and emotional support.

4. POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE PERSPECTIVE (SENTIMENT OVERRIDE)

⚠ CHALLENGE



If the first three levels of the Friendship System are working well, then couples will be in Positive Sentiment Override. Conversely when the Friendship is ailing, couples will be in Negative Sentiment Override. This concept was initially proposed by Weiss (1980).

Positive Perspective (Positive Sentiment Override)

Here the positive sentiments or feelings we have about the relationship and our partner override negative things that our partner might do. We don't take negativity personally, but merely as evidence that our partner is stressed. We tend to notice negative events but not take them very seriously. We tend to accurately see the positive things our partner is doing and

minimize the negative, perhaps even distorting toward the positive, and seeing even negative interactions and gestures as neutral.

Negative Perspective (Negative Sentiment Override)

Here the negative sentiments or feelings we have about the relationship and our partner override anything positive our partner might do that are good. We are hyper-vigilant for put downs; we tend not to notice positive events. We tend to distort positive events and see them as neutral or sometimes even as negative. That is to say, we tend to minimize the positives and maximize the negatives in our relationship. We might even re-write history. This is not something that one chooses, rather it is something that happens to us when the relationship hasn't been going well for a long time.

5. MANAGE CONFLICT

⚠ CHALLENGE



Conflict is natural in relationships. Furthermore, it has functional, positive aspects because through our conflicts we learn more about ourselves and our partners, which can lead to greater intimacy. The Masters of relationships are gentle toward one another, they start conflict discussions without blame (including pre-emptive repair, such as “I know I’m partly to blame here”), they accept influence, they self-soothe, they repair and de-escalate, they use positive affect (especially humor and affection) during conflict to de-escalate physiological arousal, and they are able to make compromises.

Longitudinal research indicates that over time, only 31% of couples’ problems are solvable. The rest, or 69% of couples’ problems are perpetual. They don’t get solved over time. Typically, perpetual problems stem from differences in personality and lifestyle preferences between partners. The masters of relationship can dialogue about these perpetual issues, while the disasters of relationship get “gridlocked” about them, meaning, they either have escalated fights about these issues or avoid talking about them altogether. Perpetual issues often contain an underlying dream or existential need for each partner that must be expressed for a couple to better understand each other’s position on the issue.

6. MAKE LIFE DREAMS COME TRUE

⚠ CHALLENGE



A crucial aspect of any relationship is to create an atmosphere that encourages each person to talk honestly about his or her dreams, values, convictions and aspirations, and to feel that the relationship supports those life dreams.

7. CREATE SHARED MEANING

⚠ CHALLENGE



A relationship is about building a life together, a life that has a sense of shared purpose and meaning. Couples create meaning together in many ways, including creating formal and informal rituals of connection. Rituals of connection are ways of spending time together that make the time special and reliably positive. Examples include anything from ways of celebrating holidays together to ways of saying good-night. Successful couples share their individual goals and life missions with each other. They support one another’s basic roles in life, and may also share similar values and meanings they give to certain symbols in life.

8. TRUST

✓ STRENGTH



Partners trust one another when each person acts in ways that maximize benefits for their partner, not just for themselves. To build trust, partners are finding out, “Will you be there for me?” in lots of different situations. For example, “Will you be there for me if your mother criticizes me?” or “Will you be there for me if I’m sick or depressed?” Couples need to know that their partner will keep them physically, mentally and emotionally safe.

9. COMMITMENT

✓ STRENGTH



Commitment exists when each partner believes that this relationship is a lifelong journey, for better or for worse. When there is a true sense of commitment, partners are loyal to one another, see each other as their best choice, and cherish each other. There is no one else that they would rather spend their life with. When partners lack commitment, they often make negative comparisons between their current partner and a real or fantasized alternative partner with whom they think they’ll be happier. In these comparisons, their current partner is found lacking.

Friendship

Friendship and Intimacy



1. LOVE MAPS

✓ STRENGTH

Each partner knows the other's inner world and feels known by the other.

Strength – *You believe you know your partner well and you feel known by your partner. You are interested in updating your love maps of each other.*



2. FONDNESS AND ADMIRATION

⚠ CHALLENGE

Each partner feels admired, appreciated, and respected.

Challenge – *You don't feel admired, appreciated or respected in this relationship.*



3. TURNING TOWARD OR AWAY

✓ STRENGTH

Partners are responsive to each other.

Strength – *You feel that your partner is responsive to your bids most of the time.*

Trust and Commitment

These are the weight-bearing walls of the Sound Relationship House

1. TRUST

✓ STRENGTH



Both partners maximize benefits for their partner as well as for themselves. Partners have one another's back and value each other's needs.

Strength – You believe that you can trust your partner to have your back and have your best interest at heart.

2. COMMITMENT

✓ STRENGTH



Partners are loyal to each other and see this relationship as their preferred choice for life, instead of looking around for better relationship options.

Strength – You are loyal to one another.

Shared Meaning



1. RITUALS OF CONNECTION

✓ STRENGTH

Rituals are your daily routines and family traditions. You can count on them – like having dinner together every night, or talking about your day before bedtime, or celebrating a birthday by dining out.



2. SUPPORTING ROLES

✓ STRENGTH

Roles refer to the various hats that each partner wears – husband/wife, mother/father, son/daughter, employee, lover, etc., and how supported each partner feels within each of those roles.



3. SHARED GOALS

⚠ CHALLENGE

This refers to how similar your goals are for both yourselves and your relationship – like want to have children, to travel together, or save money for the future.



4. SHARED SYMBOLS

⚠ CHALLENGE

Symbols refer to your values, beliefs and philosophy of life - how similarly those are aligned and how supportive each partner is around those symbols. One such symbol might be a home. One partner might want their home to be “Grand Central Station” (meaning, a place open to many other people) while the other partner might want their home to be a “refuge,” a place closed to others.

Conflict Management

Conflict Management System

1. HARSH STARTUP

 CHALLENGE



The way conflict discussions begin sets the tone for the rest of the conversation. If the conversation begins with blaming, critical words, we call this a harsh startup, and the discussion is likely to spiral down into negativity. The typical beginning sounds something like “You always leave your stuff everywhere. You’re too lazy to pick anything up.”

Challenge – You struggle with how to express your hurts and disappointments in the relationship. The way you communicate your feelings can end up sabotaging your getting listened to.

2. THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

 CHALLENGE



The following four behaviors have been shown by research to be very destructive TO relationships:

1. *Criticism – blaming a problem on a personality flaw in your partner*
2. *Defensiveness – denying any personal responsibility for a problem by either playing the innocent victim or counter-attacking*
3. *Contempt – verbally attacking your partner through name-calling, sarcasm, mockery, and put-downs from a place of superiority*
4. *Stonewalling – shutting down, not talking, and giving your partner no verbal or non-verbal signs that you are listening*

Challenge – You struggle to be careful and respectful when you attempt to manage conflict.

3. FLOODING

 CHALLENGE



Sometimes during arguments people’s heart rates escalate to the point that they can’t take in their partner’s perspective. When this happens, we say that the partner with the elevated heart-rate is “flooded”. Physiological flooding blocks the partner from hearing what the other person is saying. In fact, no matter what is said, all they can see or hear is attack, and all they can think about is getting away, lashing out, or shutting down.

This state is similar to “fight-flight-or-freeze.” Anyone can get to this point. When this happens, it means the relationship does not feel emotionally safe.

Challenge – One or both of you tend to get “flooded” or physiologically overwhelmed when discussing conflicts. (Flooding is not an emotional state – it’s a physiological one.

4. ACCEPTING INFLUENCE

 CHALLENGE



Accepting influence means that each person is willing to take in their partner’s perspective as valid, and they look for ways in which their partner’s point of view makes sense. Masters of relationship find ways to say “Yes” or “Good point.” This doesn’t mean that they give up their own position on the issue, but rather that they understand that both perspectives warrant consideration.

Challenge – One or both of you struggle to listen to your partner’s point of view and accept it as valid.

5. COMPROMISE

 CHALLENGE



Compromise means that each person is willing and able to be flexible in order to solve ongoing problems. Partners seek out common ground. Compromise does not mean giving up one’s own position, but rather looking at both positions and working to build a bridge that encompasses a part of both partners’ wants and needs.

Challenge – Compromise is difficult and often feels like you’re giving up or giving in.

6. REPAIR ATTEMPTS

 CHALLENGE



Repair attempts are any means of soothing hurt feelings or fixing a misunderstanding or conflict. It can be a simple “I’m sorry” or “I didn’t mean to say it that way”.

Challenge – It is difficult to say “I’m sorry” and there might be a tendency to want your partner to hurt as badly as you do after a painful conversation.