

TREK QUESTIONNAIRE
to be used with
Home-Base Marital Mentoring
for pre-marriage, remarriage, new marriage

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1 – Relationships with the Growing-up Family

“Separating Emotionally”

All of us come from somewhere. We have histories, events that have shaped the way we approach the world. Family is the big one, but broader contexts like your culture, your age, your ethnicity – these are also factors that define and limit who you are.

Even your marriage choices are influenced by your relationship with your family. Being the oldest, or youngest or “middlest” says a lot about who you choose and who chooses you. If you were raised as the family “prince” or “princess” then you would have quite different expectations than if you were a “lost” child in a family that avoided emotional connection.

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

Judith Wallerstein in the book “The Good Marriage” believes that the primary developmental task is separating emotionally "from a family of one's childhood" so as to invest fully in the marriage and, at the same time, to redefine the lines of connection between both families of origin.

Questions for Pre-marriage

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

Questions for New Marriage

1. In your first few months or years of marriage, what have you most appreciated about your spouse's parents in their relationship with you?
2. With which in-law (e.g. brother-in-law, mother-in-law) do you feel closest? Most distant?
3. Have your parents-in-law been mostly a help or a hindrance in your early marriage?
4. In early marriage, couples need to find a way to "leave well" their family of origin. How do you feel that you are doing? How do you feel that your spouse is doing?
5. Cut-off has to do with no active relationship with the family of your youth. Do you fear or experience cut-off with your growing up family?

Questions for Remarriage

1. What has been your experience in merging your family of origin with your previous partner's family? Has this been mostly a good experience? Describe.
2. What are the qualities of a parent-in-law that you have valued? Not valued?
3. What kind of person will you be to your future parents-in-law?
4. In leaving the influence of the family that raised you, what has helped and what has hindered in you becoming the person that you are today?
5. When you look to your partner's family, what particular graces do you see? Do you see potential problems as well?

2 – Personal Communication “Building Togetherness”

There are probably more books written on personal communication in marriage and relationships than any other subject (sexual affection may be a close second). Many newly married couples say that they were communicating easily during their engagement and early months of marriage. They find that they were able to plan their wedding, determine where to live, and establish who will do what during the first few months. But after several months of marriage some couples discover the ease of the conversation lessens: there are a lot more decisions and details to work through than had been anticipated. Some couples forget that personal communication that seemed so natural in the courting stage now needs to be practiced. A lot of the “hard slog” of early marriage is often a decline in personal communication.

Wallerstein believes that the second task of building "The Good Marriage" is to build togetherness by creating an intimacy that supports the relationship while carving out each persons autonomy. She observes that these issues are central throughout the marriage but loom especially large at the outset, at midlife, and retirement.

Learning to communicate effectively with one another can go a long way to resolve many of the stresses in early marriage. Here are a few questions for your consideration.

Questions for Pre-marriage

1. How would you like your partner to tell you (and show you) that you are appreciated?
2. What is the best thing about your present couple communication?
3. What is most aggravating aspect of your present couple communication?
4. How would you prefer your partner to request changes in some of the things that you do or say?
5. When do you feel listened to by your partner (mark as many as apply)?
 - Lets me talk without interruption.
 - Agrees with what I am saying.
 - Lets me say anything I want (within agreed upon limits).
 - Smiles warmly at me when I talk.
 - Faces me squarely and looks into my eyes (this can be hard when you are driving!).
 - Doesn't get angry with me or reacts to me without thinking.

- Lets me do what is important to me.
- Asks questions and makes comments.
- Changes his / her mind to understand me.
- Puts away busyness (the TV or web surfing, etc.) to focus in.
- Tries to figure out my feelings.
- Values my opinion more than our friends or family.
- Other:

- Other:

- Other:

6. List some things your future partner does that make it difficult to share yourself with him / her.
7. Talk about one aspect of your relationship you've been reluctant to discuss with your partner and wish to now.
8. How do you usually resolve conflict? How do you think your partner usually resolves conflict?
9. How do you anticipate forgiveness operating within your marriage? Is forgiveness easy for you to offer? Is offer forgiveness to someone who has hurt you difficult for you?

Questions for New Marriage

1. Describe how your personal communication is similar or different than when you were pre-married? If there are changes, what do you attribute these changes to?
2. Describe the "hotspots" for your communication?
3. How do you set the opportunity (atmosphere) for personal communication?
4. Someone has said that if 80% of our communication was affirmative and appreciative, most of our communication problems would disappear. What do you think?

Questions for Remarriage

1. Describe your communication styles? Are you mostly an instigator (pursuer, initiator, change maker)? Are you mostly a responder (wait to gather information, follower)? What about your future partner?
2. In your previous relationships, was your communication something that kept you together and well connected? Was your communication something that harmed your ongoing relationship?

A Conversation Key: We encourage married couples to find 10 minutes in the early morning and 10 minutes sometime in the evening to create a face-to-face dialogue. Actually looking at each other (we call this “attending”) rather than distracted glancing helps friendship conversation in intimate relationships.

You may wish to simply talk about the challenges and pleasures of your day, what your plans are for the coming evening or week, what you consider the best of your life as well as the biggest difficulties. This is not for change making or conflict. It is simple conversation.

3 – Children, Parenting and Expectations

“Welcoming a Change in Role”

Judith Wallerstein believes that the third developmental task of building a good marriage has to do with embracing the roles of parenthood and to absorb the impact of the baby's entrance into the dyad all the while protecting their own marital identity. Kids come pretty early in the marriage pilgrimage (usually in the first 5-8 years) and the identity of the marriage is still often in flux. This is a good thing as the child will demand her rightful place in the family.

The entry of the child into the dyad is dramatic! She comes nosily, dependently and, soon you will discover, mimicking the idiosyncrasies of your spouse and yourself. A great formula for change.

In this section the questions are directed towards your expectations of ourselves as parents when you have children. For those couples who are determined not to have children, they may wish to skip this outline (or do it twice!).

Questions for Pre-marriage

1. Describe some of your best memories as being a child? Would you think of your childhood as “happy” or “good”?
2. Do you plan to have children? If so, why? And, if so, how many kids would you like to have? And how did you come to determine this number?
3. If you could not have kids how do you think you would you handle that?
4. If you plan to have kids, when would you like to have your first, and what do you figure is the best spacing between your children?
5. In one sentence, say what having your own child would mean to you (or means to you).
6. What do you think is the relationship between your sexual intimacy and the possibility of creation of a new life?
7. What are your plans for / practice in birth control? Do you feel comfortable with your method of birth control?

Questions for New Marriage

1. In one sentence, say what having your own child would mean to you (or means to you).
2. Describe how having children would affect your marriage (or has affected your marriage).
3. What do you think your 5 best assets as a parent are / would be:

4. What do you think your spouse's 5 best assets as a parent are / would be:
5. What do you think your several liabilities as a parent are / would be:
6. What do you think your spouse's several liabilities as a parent are / would be:
7. What changes do you want to make from the way in which your own parents' raised you?
8. How do you imagine your parents will be towards their grandchildren?
9. How will you invite / restrict your parents with your children?
10. Describe what you think your style as co-parents would be (or is).

Questions for Remarriage

1. How do you intend to integrate your previous family [including children if you have them] into your family dyad?
2. Most couples under stress experience “triangulation” with the other spouse’s children. Triangulation is the process of placing energy towards one person [or party, event, circumstance, etc.] at the expense of another. Quite often, a husband or wife orients towards their own natural children at the expense of their marriage. How might you triangulate in your remarriage around your children?
3. Do you have any expectation that children will care for you in your old age? Do you worry about being alone when your spouse dies?
4. How are you planning to finance your blended family?
5. If you needed to live on one spouse’s income, which spouse would work outside of the home and which spouse would work inside the home? Who are you planning as guardians for your children?
6. How do you compare your varying and parenting styles? Do you view your styles as complementary, similar, different, opposite?

A Conversation Idea: As a couple, interview 3-5 parents / families that you admire [your parents may be included in the couples that you interview]. Ask them some of the following questions or ask some questions of your own:

- How has being a parent affected your marital life?
- What are two or three pieces of advice you could give me about being a parent?
- Tell me the significant costs versus benefits that you have accrued in being a parent. Do you have any direct advice for me?
- What are the skills that are required to be a successful parent?
- How have you handled tragedies or difficulties in your parenting lives?

You may wish to keep a journal of your interview information. It may be helpful for you as you move through the developmental stages of your lives as your parallel lives of your children.

4 – Relational History and Spousal Qualities

“Emotional Bank Account”

None of us expects trauma when it actually happens. When sickness or tragedy or a stage of life challenges our marriage, we depend upon the resources of our relationship as we build towards a new future. Wallerstein sees this as the fourth developmental stage of The Good Marriage; that is, to confront and master the inevitable crises of life, while maintaining the strength of the bond in the face of adversity.

This section of our Trek Inventory is devoted to understanding our pasts as we build toward our future. This section will help you to consider the factors involved in your history. This section will also enable you to consider previous relationships and how these affect your current relationship. An open discussion with your partner about these relationships will help you build a more secure marriage and, in fact, a good marriage. It will help you avoid future revelations that could cause hurt, mistrust or embarrassment.

Sometimes this conversation can provoke memories and experiences that are a bit tender. Not all of your life is a success and some of your relational mistakes can hurt even years following. So proceed caringly.

Questions for Pre-marriage

1. How much time has elapsed between your last significant relationship and your relationship with your partner? Do you believe this time to be adequate?
2. What do you consider to be the 4 or 5 most important characteristics for you in a spouse? How are these evident in your partner?
3. What are the three greatest strengths that you bring (or will bring) to your marriage?
4. What are the three greatest strengths that you believe your partner brings to your marriage?
5. How do you imagine that you will use your strong points to grow together?
6. What are the greatest weaknesses that you will bring to your marriage?
7. What do you think are your partner's greatest weaknesses?
8. What do you think will be the most challenging issue in your relationship? When you think of this challenge, how do you feel? Excited? Nervous?
9. List a few of your attributes that you think will help your relationship grow. (For example, you may think that you bring a sense of humour or an ability to earn sufficient income. Or, you may see in yourself a capacity to readily resolve conflict.)
10. We all give and receive love in different ways, and it is important both to understand ourselves in this respect, as well as our partner. What method of giving and receiving love is foundational for your marriage?

11. What concern or doubt do you have about yourself or your partner in your marriage? How are you working on resolving this doubt or concern?
12. What are your role expectations in marriage? (i.e., “who will do what?”) Some areas to consider:

| | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reconciler (quick to forgive) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Initiator in love making <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Money managing and bill paying <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Spiritual leading <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Shopping for clothes and groceries <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relating to the in-laws <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Home maintaining <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social scheduling <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cleaning the house <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Leadership outside the house <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Initiating conflicts | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gardening and other outdoor chores <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Driving the “family taxi” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cooking the meals <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Primary parent <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Earning most of the family money <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning the holidays <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Helper to others <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Photographing the family history <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dealing with neighbours <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Working the computer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Writing the letters |
|--|---|

Questions for New Marriage

1. A lot has changed for you since you were married. How do you see yourself different now that you are married? How are you very much the same?
2. What have you learned about your husband (or “men”) that you did not know before you were married? What have you learned about your wife (or “women”) that you did not know before you were married?
3. Some marriages are described as “initiator-responder” marriages. Who do you think is the primary initiator or responder with the roles in the table above? Do you wish to make some changes in this?
4. How does your spouse bring out the best in you? How do you bring out the best in your partner?

Questions for Remarriage

1. How much time has elapsed between your last significant relationship and your relationship with your partner? Do you believe this time to be adequate?
2. Write 3 or 4 adjectives of the best of your previous marriage and 3 or 4 descriptors of the parts of your marriage that were difficult or hurtful.

3. What were the qualities of your former spouse that you most admired and appreciated? How did your previous partner bring out the best in you? What are these qualities?
4. What were the primary causes of the break-up that you directly were responsible for? That your former spouse was directly responsible for?
5. Describe how your intended marriage partner is not a replacement for the previous spouse. How is this spouse quite different from your previous husband or wife? How are they similar?

5 -- Conflicting, Fighting and Being Hurt

A conflict-free marriage is an oxymoron. So says Dr. Judith Wallerstein in her book entitled "The Good Marriage." The fifth developmental task in creating a good marriage is to create a safe haven for the expression of differences, anger and conflict.

This section of the Trek Inventory focuses on one aspect of personal communication — conflict. The importance of this conversation is to help you identify some of the causes of being hurt and the feelings you experience in fighting.

But before you get busy, here is our bias on this – we think that conflict is normal (that is, it is made to be important in the best relationships) and that conflict can motivate you and your relationship to change and grow.

Conflict happens when your commitment to one another is high and when you are changing at different rates.

Some people are really conflict-avoidant and some are conflict-engagers. This has a lot to do with how you grew up, the kind of conflict that you have experienced, as well as the hurt you have felt and caused. Not all conflict leads to fighting; it may lead to avoidance and withdrawal. This can hurt too.

It is important to figure out some of your conflict patterns and how you will make this work for you and your marriage.

Questions for Pre-marriage, Early Marriage and Remarriage

1. When you have been hurt by something your partner has said or done, you (mark as many as apply):
 - Withdraw from your partner.
 - Do something to hurt him / her or retaliate in some way.
 - Get angry at him / her (whether you show it or not).
 - Play the martyr hoping that he (or the world!) will change.
 - Pretend everything is fine (“stuff it”).
 - Drop hints that he / she can apologize and grovel whenever.
 - Get in a “mood” or pout.
 - Wait till he / she initiates an apology or requests forgiveness.

2. The reason you respond like this is (mark as many as apply):
 - To clear the air.
 - To get your partner to listen.

- Because the two of you are so different.
- Making up is so nice.
- The pressure piles up.
- You like the attention.
- You can't agree.
- You want something very much and this is the way to get it.
- You have a short temper.
- He / she starts it (and therefore it is his / her fault).
- Nothing else works or gets his / her attention.

3. You are most hurt by your partner when he / she (mark as many as apply):

- Pays more attention to work than me
- Puts another relationship first
- Is careless about money
- Doesn't keep up his / her appearance
- Embarrasses me publicly
- Does all the talking
- Leaves everything up to me
- Doesn't listen to me
- Goes out too much with friends
- Doesn't give me any space/peace
- Says "no" to sexual advances

4. The worst things about our disagreements are (mark as many as apply):

- Name calling
- Physical violence
- Never finishing
- Hard to apologise
- Bringing up the past
- I always lose
- They're so frequent
- They last too long

- We never solve the problem
- They are vengeful
- My feelings are hurt

5. Write some rules for “fair fighting” that you can apply to your relationship.
6. How would you describe your way of handling conflict? How would you describe your partner’s way of handling conflict? How would you describe your parents’ way of handling conflict?

| | | You Win | You Lose |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Partner Wins | 1 Win / Win | 2 Win / Lose | |
| Partner Loses | 3 Lose / Win | 4 Lose /Lose | |

[For example: do you feel that you both win in a conflict (that is there is lots of respect and results in even more affection)? That would be quadrant 1. If you feel that you usually lose and your partner usually wins, that would be quadrant 2.]

7. When there was fighting in your family of origin (the family you grew up in), you would (describe what you would do):
8. The key to handling conflict in marriage is (this is your opinion):

6 – Our Sexual Relationship

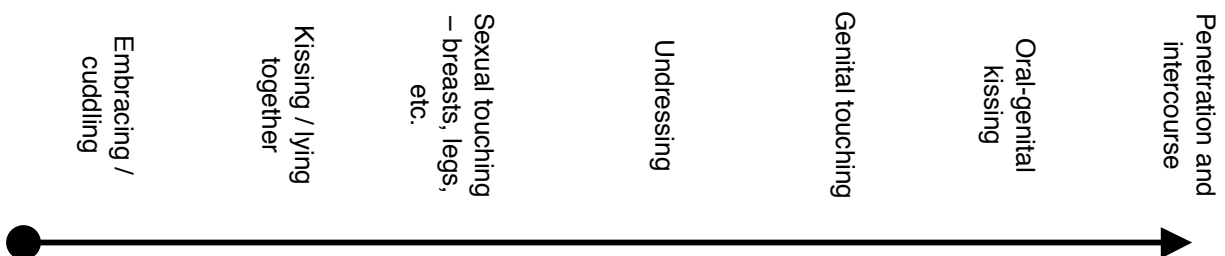
In "The Good Marriage," Judith Wallerstein believes that the sixth developmental stage in building a marriage that survives and thrives is to establish a rich and pleasurable sexual relationship that is protected from the incursions of workplace and family obligations.

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

It can be very helpful to talk through each other's sexual ideas and hopes. Of course, not all questions need to be answered. You decide what is comfortable for you to discuss. Just let the mentoring couple know.

Questions for Pre-marriage

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



Questions for New Marriage

1. Do you feel pretty free to talk about your sexual needs, hopes and feelings with your spouse? Explain why it is hard to talk about sexual issues, if it is.
2. What are a few things that turn you on sexually? What are a few things that turn you off sexually?
3. Describe two or three places or situations that encourage lovemaking for you.
4. How often do you expect to give and receive sexual intimacy with your partner? Are you feeling pretty comfortable with this decision?
5. How are you handling different levels of sexual desire in your marriage? Is this a conflict issue for you?
6. How is birth control working out for you in your new marriage?
7. What are your feelings about masturbation? Do you feel that this form of sexual expression builds or harms your marriage?
8. How do you handle the inevitable temptation of sexual desire for someone else? Are you able to talk about this together?
9. How comfortable are you with nakedness? Are you comfortable dressing or showering together?
10. Are you able to pray together as you are involved in a sexual relationship? Or, is your sexual intimacy separate from your spiritual intimacy?

Questions for Remarriage

1. How do you think that you can "affair proof" your marriage? That is, what are you able to do to ensure that your marriage is secure and safe?
2. How do you talk to your spouse about the remembrances of previous sexual intimacies with other partners?
3. What would you do if a previous spouse or partner contacted you to have coffee or lunch [on the surface it seems quite innocent]? Do you feel comfortable talking to your husband or wife about this inquiry? Do you feel it is safe to meet up with someone with whom you have had an intimate relationship?
4. Perhaps you have children – how do children impact your love life?
5. Who is or will be involved in the sexual education of your children?
6. How comfortable are you in discussing your sexual desires with one another?
7. Take a minute and describe the relationship between sexual and spiritual intimacy in this marriage. Is there any way that you wish to improve this?

7 – Weekly Experience Record

The seventh developmental task in Judith Wallerstein's research is the management of emotions, particularly how we see humour and enjoy laughter in the muck of everyday life. Boredom is often a mask for laziness and anger, and the expression of gut-level laughter detoxifies much of the stress and angst of living. In her research she observed that couples with good marriages found a place for humour and friendship that expressed laughter.

Life for everybody is difficult sometimes. The following chart gives you the opportunity of talking about “when life is hard.” There is another chart that focuses on “when life is good.”

Your mentors know that it is not bad all the time.

On the following chart, show where you feel each of you fit in terms of the item mentioned. Write your first initial in the cell whether the descriptor is rare for you, moderate for you, frequent for you. Do the same for your partner using his / her initial.

Questions for Pre-marriage, Marriage and Remarriage

Weekly Experience Record (Negative)

1. When life is hard: Please go through the following chart and answer for yourself. Go back and indicate by a (★) where you think your partner would put you on each of the experiences.

| Weekly Experience | Rarely | Moderately | Frequently |
|--|--------|------------|------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Anger, irritability, frustration | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Anxiety, worry, fear, dread | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Guilt, self-condemnation | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hopelessness, despair | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Loneliness, isolation, cut-off | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Helplessness, weak | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Self-pity, "poor me" | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Inferiority, worthlessness | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Avoiding responsibility | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undisciplined, procrastinating | | | |

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Attacking, defending | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Withdrawing, quitting | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Abusing alcohol or drugs | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Overeating | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Smoking | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sexual frustrations, upsets | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complying to pressure | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Financial worries, fears | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Inability to achieve | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: | | | |

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

Weekly Experience Record (Positive)

Questions for Pre-marriage, Marriage and Remarriage

- When life is good: Please go through the following chart and answer for yourself. Go back and indicate by a (★) where you think your partner would put you on each of the experiences.

| Weekly Experience | Rarely | Moderately | Frequently |
|---|--------|------------|------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Content with who I am | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Optimistic about the future | | | |

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forgiving and willing to forget | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Looking forward to new beginnings | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Feeling connected | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strong and resourceful | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concern for others wellbeing | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Feel valued and valuable | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Taking responsibility | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Disciplined and proactive | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conciliating, reconciling | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Attending, connecting | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High on life and living | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Loving food | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Loving indulgences | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sexual pleasures | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Handling life's pressure | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning for a financial future | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Able to achieve | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: | | | |

Check-in: This experience can be tough on people that care for and love each other. Before you leave your mentoring session, make sure to check in with each other. A simple, "Are you doing okay with this?" is probably sufficient.

8 – Giving and Receiving Love¹

“Emotional Bank Account”

Wallerstein understands the eighth stage or developmental task of creating a good marriage is in the providing of nurturance and comfort to one another, satisfying each partner's needs for dependency and offering continuing encouragement and support.

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

Now wouldn't it be good if you could figure out what your partner's style of loving is? This is the point of this section of your Trek Inventory. Enjoy!

Questions for Pre-marriage

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

¹ You may know of Gary Chapman's “The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate” (1995). This is the source document for this idea.

9. Take some time to write your partner a short note or letter about what you have learned from this section. Be a bit innovative in your creation!

Questions for New Marriage

1. How have you found that you give and receive love now since being married? Is this as you anticipated it? Better, worse or just different?
2. What have been the surprises in the love that you have received? What have been the surprises in the love that you anticipated but have not received?
3. Think of 3 ways that you would like your partner to love you that are realistic (it can be done), measureable (a number value can be put on it), not the result of a recent controversy or conflict (e.g. "Pick up your clothes and don't throw them in the corner!") and less than \$10. Now write these down!
4. How do you like most to be touched? What parts of your body do you love to be massaged? Can you ask for this?
5. What is your pattern for gift giving (at Christmas, anniversaries, birthdays, etc.)? Is this working for you? Would you like to make some changes?
6. Write down your favourite compliment that your spouse has ever given you.

Questions for Remarriage

1. Love languages change over time and with different circumstances. You may wish to be loved in ways that are new for you. Tell your spouse 3 ways that you would like to be loved by him or her.
2. Take a minute and reflect how you were best loved as a child. How about as a teen? How were you best loved when you were in your first marriage and following? How are you best loved now?
3. How do you show your kids that you love each other?
4. Describe your ideal \$20 date and your perfect \$100 date.

Languages of Love: We have found that women so often want and give "acts of service" as their first love language. Men seem to want and give "physical touch." This can result in some challenge if not well talked through. Having observed that, both men and women change something of the order of their love languages almost daily depending on circumstance or surrounding.

9 – Our Spiritual Relationship

The final developmental stage of Wallerstein's "The Good Marriage" has to do with keeping alive the idealized image of the early stage of being a couple while facing the sober realities of the changes wrought by time. Now this might be stretching it a little bit but it seems to me that this has to do with the spiritual essence of what marriage is about. It is about "the ideals" with the tension of "the reals." In this section of our questionnaire we explore spiritual vitality and religious participation and how this affects and builds our good marriages.

Our spiritual relationship is understood as how we connect with God and how this intimacy affects how we connect with the world. Everyone is spiritual in some way or the other – it's not just Christians or church attendees. How we merge our spiritual lives is a significant factor in the satisfaction and stability of marriage. It is not just between varying theologies [e.g.: between Protestant and Catholic or Jewish and Muslim, etc.]; it is also based on how our inward selves approach God. One spouse may experience the imminence of God and thrive in celebratory worship, where the other thrives in the transcendence of the Creator and finds himself most alive in creation [or nature] more than in one or two hour church services. However a couple works out these tensions in pre-marriage, early marriage and remarriage can indicate the satisfaction the couple will experience over many years.

Questions for Pre-marriage

1. How would you describe your spiritual life:

Very important ←————→ Not my thing
Vital Not interested

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

Important to both of us ←————→ Not very important
Vital to our lives Not involved

3. What will you do to help or encourage your partner to grow spiritually even though you might have differing spiritual commitments? How do you think you might be a hindrance to your partner spiritually?
4. What do you think is the best way your partner can help you grow spiritually?
5. Are you planning on participating as a couple in a spiritual community or church?
6. Take a minute and write a prayer for yourself, your partner or your marriage. [You might consider utilizing the Lord's prayer as a template. See the Lord's prayer at the end of this outline.]

Questions for New Marriage

1. Briefly describe your relationship with God. How is your spiritual life now different than when you were not married?
2. Are there spiritual disciplines or formations that you are developing as a couple? What are these formations?
3. Do you feel spiritually equal to your partner? Are you intimidated in any way by your partner's spirituality?
4. What does it mean to you to be "spiritually one"? What does it mean to you to be "equally yoked together" (an old King James bible phrase)?

Questions for Remarriage

1. You may have been divorced or widowed prior to marrying your current partner. Was spiritual life and faith important to you in the past? Is it important to you now? Has this changed over the years?
2. Locate your vows that you spoke in your wedding ceremony. You might wish to print these and frame them close to your bed. Vows have to do with the promise that you make to one another about your covenant. And they are best read often and meaningfully.
3. If you plan to incorporate a regular spiritual life in your marriage, how are you planning to do this? Do you do this now? (Do you know what this is all about?)
4. What does "spiritual headship" or "submission" mean to you? (You may wish to look this up Ephesians 5 in the New Testament if you would like to see what it says in the bible.) Is this an upsetting / archaic / interesting concept for you?

Visitation: As a couple, visit two or three places of worship that are compatible to your spiritual lives. You might wish to visit the new churches in your immediate locale or churches across town or even in another city. Assess whether or not these places of worship will support your spiritual lives as a couple.