

1. A loving, lifelong couple relationship promotes a long and healthy life.
2. A loving, lifelong couple relationship helps your career and finances.
3. A loving lifelong couple relationship protects you and your partner against stress.
4. Being raised by parents in a loving, lifelong couple relationship is really good for children.
5. A loving lifelong couple relationship is usually valued by extended family and friends and assists you to feel part of a broader community.
6. Strong, loving couple relationships can be strengthened with couple relationship education.
7. Despite usually starting with love and commitment, about one in three marriages and one in two cohabiting relationships end within 10 years.
8. There is key relationship between knowledge and skills, which can be learned, that help people sustain a loving lifelong couple relationship.
9. Most adults have learned some, but not all, of the important relationship knowledge and skills.
10. Across a lifetime there are inevitable stresses that can strain a couple relationship, but having the right relationship knowledge and skills helps manage the strain on your relationship.
11. Many separated people report that they wish they had worked harder on their relationship, but they did not know what to do.
12. Should problems develop in your relationship, knowing what to do and going for help early gives you a much better chance of solving those problems.

**FIGURE 1.1.** Twelve good reasons to attend couple relationship (marriage) education. For most—though not all—people, a loving, lifelong couple relationship involves being married. There is evidence that, on average, married people are more likely to be happy and to stay together than people who live together. Some readers might prefer to describe what they offer as marriage education, and to explain the benefits of a loving, lifelong marriage.

**Names: Partner 1:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Partner 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**1. GOALS OF PARTICIPATION**

What are you hoping to get from taking part?

**Partner 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Partner 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**2. CURRENT RELATIONSHIP**

a. Can you tell me how you met? \_\_\_\_\_

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b. What attracted you to each other?

**Partner 1 to Partner 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Partner 2 to Partner 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

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(cont.)

**FIGURE 3.2.** Couple intake interview.

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c. What do you see as the strengths of your relationship?

**Partner 1:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Partner 2:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

d. All relationships have their less positive aspects. Are there any areas you'd like to work on to make sure things work out the way you'd like?

**Partner 1:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Partner 2:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

e. This might sound like a bit of a funny question to ask, but we ask it because it does happen. Has there ever been a time in your relationship for either of you, when you've left the house for more than 24 hours and you weren't sure you would come back?

**Partner 1:** Yes / No \_\_\_\_\_  
If yes, how long were you apart for? \_\_\_\_\_

**Partner 2:** Yes / No \_\_\_\_\_  
If yes, how long were you apart for? \_\_\_\_\_

f. Sometimes when a couple disagrees things can get heated. This can result in one or both partners slapping, pushing, or hitting the other. Have you ever hit, pushed, or slapped your partner?

<b>Partner 1:</b>	Yes / No	<b>Partner 2:</b>	Yes / No
Has your partner ever done this to you?			

<b>Partner 1:</b>	Yes / No	<b>Partner 2:</b>	Yes / No
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g. Have you ever had problems in your current relationship for which you have sought professional help? Yes / No

(cont.)

**FIGURE 3.2.** (cont.)

If yes, give details including the nature of problem, treatment sought, length and dates of treatment, what helped/didn't help, and outcome of treatment from your perspective.

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### 3. INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE

Have you ever sought help for any psychological or psychiatric problem?

<b>Partner 1:</b>	No	0
	Depression	1
	Anxiety disorder	2
	Posttraumatic stress disorder	3
	Bipolar disorder	4
	Psychotic disorder	5
	Alcohol/substance abuse/dependence	6
	Other	7

If yes, clarify nature of problem, including the number of episodes, treatment sought, length and dates of treatment, what helped/didn't help, and if problem is ongoing or not.

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<b>Partner 2:</b>	No	0
	Depression	1
	Anxiety disorder	2
	Posttraumatic stress disorder	3
	Bipolar disorder	4
	Psychotic disorder	5
	Alcohol/substance abuse/dependence	6
	Other	7

If yes, clarify nature of problem, including the number of episodes, treatment sought, length and dates of treatment, what helped/didn't help, and if problem is ongoing or not.

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(cont.)

**FIGURE 3.2.** (cont.)

4. **HOPES/EXPECTATIONS OF THE PROGRAM**

a. What does each of you hope to get from the program? (Clarify goals.)

**Partner 1:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Partner 2:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. Do either of you have any concerns about doing the program?

**Partner 1:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Partner 2:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

c. Is there anything else either of you want to discuss about your participation?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**FIGURE 3.2.** *(cont.)*

**Names: Partner 1:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Partner 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of review session:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Educator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**1. EDUCATOR-IDENTIFIED COUPLE PROFILE**

Couple strengths: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Couple challenges: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Areas of couple agreement and disagreement: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**2. QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE COUPLE UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR PROFILE**

Open questions to put to couple on overall understanding: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Open questions to put to couple on strengths: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Open questions to put to couple on challenges: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Their answers: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**3. EXPLORING PLUSES AND MINUSES OF STATUS QUO**

What strengths are important to sustain? How will you sustain them? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What challenges do you think are most important? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(cont.)

**FIGURE 3.4.** Providing feedback to a couple on their RELATE assessment.

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What will happen if you change nothing about those challenges? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What goals might you like to see in your relationship (sustaining strengths, changing challenges)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**4. INDIVIDUAL PARTNER ACTION GOAL SETTING**

**Partner 1:**

What can you contribute to enhance your relationship? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How would you go about doing that? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Partner 2:**

What can you contribute to enhance your relationship? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How would you go about doing that? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**5. RELATIONSHIP OF PARTNER GOALS TO COUPLE CARE CONTENT \_\_\_\_\_**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**6. ANY SPECIAL AREAS NEEDING ADDITIONAL INPUT \_\_\_\_\_**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. OTHER ISSUES OR QUESTIONS**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**FIGURE 3.4.** *(cont.)*

Please rate your current level of knowledge and skill in each of the areas listed below, using the following key:

- 0 No skill
- 1 Some skill
- 2 Adequate skill level
- 3 Good skill level
- 4 Excellent skill level

### **KNOWLEDGE AREAS**

1. Summarize and analyze key psychological influences on couple relationship satisfaction and stability.
2. Analyze marriage and relationship education outcome research.
3. Describe key risk indicators and risk factors that put couples at risk for marriage and relationship problems.

### **COUPLE CARE DELIVERY SKILLS**

1. Assess the couple's relationship education needs and goals, and determine if the Couple CARE program is appropriate.
2. Describe the key dimensions of couple relationship expectations, and the role of family of origin and other learning experiences on development of those expectations.
3. Introduce the importance of relationship goal setting to couples.
4. Help partners identify the key aspects of their relationship visions and discuss how these relate to setting relationship goals.
5. Demonstrate key listening and speaking skills.
6. Describe and give examples of emotional bids in couple communication.
7. Help partners self-assess and set goals for communication enhancement.
8. Help couples understand the need for self-assessment and goal setting in both the social-support and acts-of-caring areas.
9. Help partners self-assess both their social support and acts of caring, then help them set goals for enhancement in these areas.
10. Help partners identify changes to their shared/individual activities that would enhance their relationship, and offer suggestions for change where appropriate.

(cont.)

**FIGURE 4.1.** Couple CARE leader knowledge and skills.

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11. Describe key conflict patterns, guidelines for managing conflict, and ground rules for managing conflict.
12. Help partners self-assess and set goals for using guidelines and ground rules for managing conflict, and provide appropriate suggestions for change/fine-tuning to meet couples' needs where necessary.
13. Discuss with partners the importance of *experimenting* with guidelines and ground rules, noting that it may take some fine-tuning and ongoing review to find the combination that suits them best.
14. Help partners identify strengths and weaknesses in their current communication in relation to sex.
15. Help partners set goals for enhancement of their sexual relationship.
16. Describe the common changes occurring in couples' lives in the early years of their relationship, and the adaptations couples need to make.
17. Help couples to self-assess likely changes in their future, identify the likely effects of those changes, and develop plans for adapting to those changes.
18. Assist couples in identifying ways they can self-assess and maintain their relationship skills over time and set goals for future development.

#### **RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION PROCESS SKILLS**

1. Provide clear instructions on the content and process of couple activities and facilitation activities.
2. Identify blocks to learning for one or both partners and assist them to problem-solve to overcome those barriers.
3. Respond positively and negotiate appropriately with partners who respond negatively to activities or input.
4. Fully engage both partners in activities and discussions.
5. Provide empathic support to partners in their efforts to enhance their relationship and assist partners to problem-solve barriers in the relationship.
6. Review barriers to completion of program tasks for partners who do not engage in more than half the tasks/activities and negotiate appropriate future engagement with couples.
7. Present ideas in an engaging manner with appropriate use of examples, humor, and interaction with partners.
8. Develop an appropriate balance of unstructured and structured discussion so that discussion of the couple's concerns/issues can be balanced with completion of tasks.

**FIGURE 4.1.** (*cont.*)

## MY RELATIONSHIP EXPERIENCES

**On your own,** reflect on and write down what you saw in your parents' (or other carers') relationship when you were growing up. What was their relationship like? (For example, did they argue a lot? Were they affectionate with each other?) If you grew up in a single-parent family, what was your mother or father's relationship like, in general, with other people who were close to her or him?

**My parents' or carers' relationship: What was it like?** \_\_\_\_\_

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Let's get more specific now. What was your parents' (or other carers') relationship like when it came to the following?

**Boundaries** (For example, did one or both partners believe they should be very close as a couple? Did one or both partners believe that partners should maintain very independent lives?) \_\_\_\_\_

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**Power and control** (Did one partner make most of the decisions, or was decision making shared equally?) \_\_\_\_\_

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**Investment** (For example, how much time and effort did they invest in their relationship? Did one partner "give" more?) \_\_\_\_\_

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(cont.)

**FIGURE 5.1.** Relationship experiences and expectations.

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**As a couple,** discuss your answers to the following questions.

1. What relationship patterns from your parents' relationships do you want to transfer to your own relationship? Which patterns would you like to avoid?
2. How do you think your relationship with each of your parents has influenced your emotional health as an adult?

**As a couple,** discuss your answers to the exercise you just completed, "My expectations that help . . ." and "My expectations that don't help. . . ." Write down what you see as your joint **strengths and challenges** in terms of relationship expectations. There are two sorts of expectation challenges. The first is expectations that you agree might undermine your relationship (e.g., both our sets of parents divorced, and we are both a bit doubtful about whether relationships can really last). The second is when you have quite different expectations, such as one person wanting to have children and the other not.

**As a couple we think our joint strengths are:**

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**As a couple we think our potential challenges are:**

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**FIGURE 5.2.** Our relationship experiences and expectations.

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<p><b>1. DESCRIBE</b> Choose an issue you'd like to work on that involves changing something about your behavior. Describe this aspect clearly and positively (write in the spaces provided).</p> <hr/>	<p><b>2. FOCUS</b></p> <p>What do I currently do?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>What are the <b>pluses</b> of my current behavior?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>What are the <b>minuses</b> of my current behavior?</p> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><b>3. GOAL</b> Define as precisely as you can what you want to happen.</p> <hr/> <hr/>	<p><b>4. ACT</b> What will I do? Where and when will I do it?</p> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><b>5. EVALUATE—After you have implemented your action plan:</b></p> <p>What did I actually do?</p> <hr/> <p>What positives resulted?</p> <hr/> <p>What negatives resulted?</p> <hr/> <p>What do I need to do from here?</p> <hr/>	

**FIGURE 5.3.** Self-change plan.

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## Speaker Skills

1. *Describe specifics.* Provide clear and concrete descriptions of behaviors or situations.
2. *Express positives.* Clearly express your thoughts and feelings about the positive aspects of a situation or your partner's behavior, even if things seem mostly negative.
3. *Assert negatives.* Without being aggressive or attacking, say directly what you dislike or want to see change.
4. *Self-disclose feelings.* Share your thoughts and feelings with your partner even if it feels difficult.

## Listener Skills

5. *Attend.* Focus your attention on your partner when he or she is speaking. This includes having eye contact, facing your partner, and removing distractions (e.g., put down the newspaper, switch off the television).
6. *Encourage.* This involves saying things like "Oh," "Go on," or "I see" so your partner knows you're interested in what he or she is saying.
7. *Summarize content.* State back to your partner *in your own words* the *key points* of what he or she has just said.
8. *Paraphrase feelings.* Summarize in words the emotion your partner is expressing. Often his or her emotion will not be said in words, but will be reflected in how he or she says things, and how he or she looks.
9. *Ask questions.* Ask open-ended questions that encourage your partner to open his or her up ideas.
10. *Hear your partner out.* Let your partner finish speaking, consider what he or she said, and avoid immediately disagreeing or defending yourself. Put your own opinion on hold until later.

**FIGURE 6.2.** Key speaker and listener communication skills.

**On your own . . .** Place a check mark in the appropriate box to describe how *you* think it went during the discussion using this key. (Don't feel that you have to have used all the 10 skills.)

- 0 No use of this skill
- 1 Some use of this skill
- 2 OK, but could be better
- 3 Good use of this skill
- N/A Skill not applicable

	<b>Skill</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Speaker skills</b>	Describe specifics					
	Express positives					
	Assert negatives					
	Self-disclose feelings					
<b>Listener skills</b>	Attend					
	Encourage					
	Summarize content					
	Paraphrase feelings					
	Ask questions					
	Hear my partner out					

My communication strengths: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Communication goals I want to work on: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**FIGURE 6.3.** Communication self-evaluation form.

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### **Less helpful**

"I think that all went very well." (*What exactly did the person do that was good?*)

"You were very vague." (*What are you suggesting to the speaker?*)

"You did a great job of listening to me." (*What exactly was done that conveyed to you that you were being listened to?*)

"I thought you were rude; you did not seem at all interested in listening to me." (*What could the person do to show he or she was really listening?*)

### **More helpful**

"I thought you did a really good job of telling me your ideas about the problems; you were clear and to the point."

"It would have helped me if you had been specific about what you wanted to say to your sister."

"You looked at me, asked me questions, and heard me out. That made me feel you were really listening."

"If you looked at me more, and asked a question or two, I would feel like you were really focused on me."

**FIGURE 6.4.** Less helpful and more helpful forms of feedback.

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### **Emotional bid**

1. "It's a bit cold in here, isn't it?"
2. "I am off to bed for an early night, how about you?"
3. "Do you really like this new outfit?"
4. "I see that new movie Jean was telling us about is on this afternoon."
5. "Are you working late again tonight?"
6. "The kids missed you while you were away."
7. "Joey arranged to go away camping with Jeanette last weekend to that new place in the hinterland. Jeanette said it was very pretty."

### **Possible implicit message**

- "Can we cuddle and be close?"
- "Will you come with me and make love?"
- "Do you still find me attractive? Do I really look alright to you?"
- "Would you like to spend the afternoon with me at the movie?"
- "Would you spend the evening with me, I would really like you to."
- "I missed you while you were away."
- "I'd love it if you arranged a weekend away for us somewhere special. It doesn't have to be anywhere expensive."

**FIGURE 6.5.** Examples of emotional bids in close relationships.

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**On your own,** write down two examples of emotional bids you have made toward your partner.

Two examples of emotional bids I have used in my relationship:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**As a couple,** discuss the pluses of using emotional bids in your relationship. How do emotional bids work with you two? Also discuss the minuses of emotional bids. What possible misunderstandings or problems can emotional bids generate?

The pluses of emotional bids: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The minuses of emotional bids: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**FIGURE 6.6.** Reflecting on emotional bids in your relationship.

<p><b>1. DESCRIBE</b> Choose an aspect of your communication you'd like to work on. Describe this aspect clearly and positively (write in the spaces provided).</p> <hr/>	<p><b>2. FOCUS</b></p> <p>What do I currently do?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>What are the <b>pluses</b> of my current behavior?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>What are the <b>minuses</b> of my current behavior?</p> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><b>3. GOAL</b> Define as precisely as you can what you want to happen.</p> <hr/> <hr/>	<p><b>4. ACT</b> What will I do? Where and when will I do it?</p> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><b>5. EVALUATE—After you have implemented your action plan:</b></p> <p>What did I actually do?</p> <hr/> <p>What positives resulted?</p> <hr/> <p>What negatives resulted?</p> <hr/> <p>What do I need to do from here?</p> <hr/>	

**FIGURE 6.8.** Communication self-change plan.

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**On your own . . .** place a check mark in the appropriate box to rate your support skills.

- 0 No use of this skill
- 1 Some use of this skill
- 2 Adequate but there is room for improvement
- 3 Good use of this skill
- N/A Skill not applicable

	<b>Skill</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Speaker skills</b>	Describe specifics					
	Express positives					
	Assert negatives					
	Self-disclose feelings					
<b>Listener skills</b>	Attend					
	Encourage					
	Summarize content					
	Paraphrase feelings					
	Ask questions					
	Hear my partner out					
<b>Emotion-focused support</b>	Help partner express feelings					
	Encourage, reassure, give affection					
<b>Problem-focused support</b>	Help define the problem					
	Suggest specific plan of action					
	Offer specific assistance					
<b>Other support</b>	Ask type of support wanted					

My strengths in communicating support: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Things I need to work on in communicating support: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**FIGURE 7.1.** Support skill self-evaluation form.

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Caring things my partner does for me	Self-rating of how positive (from 1 to 10)	Possible <i>new</i> caring behaviors I could do for my partner	Partner rating of how positive (from 1 to 10)
		1	
		2	
		3	
		4	
		5	
		6	
		7	
		8	
		9	
10		10	

**FIGURE 7.2.** Caring behaviors checklist.

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Getting a household repair done  
Preparing an entire meal  
Helping with the dinner  
Taking care of the car  
Doing some shopping for things we need  
Doing the laundry

Balancing the check book  
Paying a bill  
Doing some needed gardening  
Doing the dishes  
Cleaning or straightening up a bit  
Mending my partner's clothes

Doing an errand  
Taking out the garbage  
Feeding or taking care of the pets  
Telling my partner something confidential  
Starting a conversation with my partner  
Asking my partner how he or she feels

Mowing the lawn  
Setting the alarm clock  
Having an enjoyable conversation  
Making some extra money  
Summarizing my partner's point of view so she or he knows I am listening

Doing something my partner asked  
Helping to dress the children  
Giving my partner a nice greeting when we meet after being apart  
Giving my partner a massage or rubdown  
Talking to my partner when he or she asks for some attention

Forgiving my partner for something  
Asking for my partner's opinion  
Smiling at my partner or laughing with him or her  
Initiating sex  
Renting a video  
Being nice to my partner's friends

Trying to cheer my partner up  
Touching my partner affectionately  
Looking nice (dress, shaving, etc.)  
Hugging or kissing my partner  
Making his or her favorite food  
Cuddling

Paying my partner a compliment  
Being nice to my partner even though he or she was mean to me  
Praising my partner  
Responding to sexual advances  
Bringing my partner a present

Doing something sexual he or she really likes  
Talking together about finances to help us stick to the budget  
Going out to dinner, a movie, or a bar  
Playing sports together  
Playing games together  
Suggesting something fun for us to do

Showing that sex was enjoyable  
Shopping for something together  
Talking about his or her friends or relatives  
Talking together about making a purchase  
Spending time together having fun  
Planning or helping with a social event  
Doing something together in the evening

**FIGURE 7.3.** Ideas for caring behaviors.

Individual activities without your partner:

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Couple activities (just the two of you):

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Shared activities with your partner and others:

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What did you discover from doing this exercise? Which boxes did you fill up the most? Which ones were the emptiest? Please answer the following questions. (cont.)

**FIGURE 7.4.** My current regular activities over the last 2 months.

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**On your own,** check the boxes that apply to you. (You might check one or two boxes in each group.)

- I would like more *independent* activities.
- I would like fewer *independent* activities.
- I would like some new *independent* activities.
- I am happy with my *independent* activities as they are, no changes are needed.
  
- I would like more *couple* activities with my partner.
- I would like fewer *couple* activities with my partner.
- I would like some new *couple* activities with my partner.
- I am happy with our *couple* activities, no changes are needed.
  
- I would like more *shared* activities with my partner and others.
- I would like fewer *shared* activities with my partner and others.
- I would like some new *shared* activities with my partner and others.
- I am happy with my *shared* activities, no changes are needed.

**FIGURE 7.4.** (*cont.*)

## Ideas for Couple Activities

- Going bicycle riding before Sunday breakfast
- Visiting friends
- Camping
- Having a shower or bath together
- Visiting a museum or art gallery together
- Playing Scrabble together
- Starting an aquarium
- Playing tennis
- Going to a sporting event (basketball, football, baseball, etc.)
- Jogging
- Making wine together
- Doing relaxation exercises or meditating together
- Gardening together
- Doing the bills together
- Going to a bar and talking
- Treating yourselves to a big breakfast of pancakes, eggs, bacon, orange juice, toast
- Going sailing
- Playing music together (guitar, piano, etc.)
- Visiting a national park with a waterfall
- Going to see a band
- Playing golf (or miniature golf) together
- Going to the race track
- Going to the botanical gardens
- Buying a new CD together
- Stargazing: lying on your back and learning to recognize all the constellations and bright stars
- Going secondhand shopping
- Making home-made pizzas and throwing lots of stuff on them
- Browsing in a bookstore together
- Turning down the sound on the TV and making up funny scripts
- Meeting for lunch or coffee during the day
- Having a BBQ in the park together
- Doing jobs together—wasting an hour or two driving around, going into different shops to get things
- Playing pool
- Daydreaming about a fantastic holiday you know you can't afford
- Renting a rowboat or canoe for the afternoon
- Writing letters to friends
- Going on a picnic
- Playing charades
- Reading a play aloud
- Reading the weekend papers together
- Taking dancing lessons
- Playing Frisbee
- Going to a festival/ markets
- Making a collage
- Going to a concert
- Going to the beach
- Going skating
- Going window shopping together
- Buying fish and chips
- Just sitting around with the lights low and talking
- Watching TV together
- Playing cards
- Cooking an exciting meal together
- Working for a political candidate
- Painting the house
- Calling up an old mutual friend on the phone long-distance
- Climbing a mountain
- Backpacking
- Planning a family reunion
- Gossiping
- Going roller-blading
- Riding bikes together
- Going for a drive
- Visiting a brand-new interesting place for a day

(cont.)

**FIGURE 7.5.** Ideas for activities.

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Flying a kite  
 Doing exercises (yoga, dance, aerobics, etc.)  
 Joining a new group or club together  
 Looking at slides, photos, or home movies  
 Eating pizza (at home or at a restaurant)  
 Washing the car  
 Inviting someone new over for dinner or drinks  
 Going out to eat  
 Playing in the rain or leaves  
 Reading in bed together  
 Working on crafts together (tie-dying, pottery, candle-making, etc.)  
 Talking about day-to-day happenings  
 Exploring new places, places you'd never usually go (junkyard, new bars, new areas of town, etc.)  
 Making or planning home improvements  
 Going swimming in the nude  
 Playing with pets  
 Spending a romantic evening alone (dinner, candlelight, music)  
 Reading poetry out loud  
 Reading science fiction or mysteries out loud in bed at night  
 Going to a party  
 Going to the library; browsing through the books and records together  
 Going swimming  
 Going dancing (ballroom, folk dancing, square dancing)  
 Cooking something you've never cooked before

Buying new home decorations  
 Going for a walk in the forest  
 Doing a jigsaw or crossword puzzle together  
 Looking around in secondhand or antique shops  
 Going horseback riding  
 Watching late movies on TV and cuddling during the commercials  
 Going to church  
 Going to a movie together  
 Baking bread together  
 Listening to music  
 Fishing  
 Making love  
 Watercolouring or fingerpainting  
 Hanging out in a new coffee shop talking and trying out new coffees  
 Getting up to see the sunrise  
 Going to the opera or ballet  
 Eating breakfast out  
 Going to a play  
 Going to an auction  
 Taking a picnic lunch to a nearby park and going hiking together or with friends  
 Inviting old friends over for Sunday lunch  
 Arranging and taking pictures  
 Going on a shopping spree  
 Giving a party  
 Eating and talking together  
 Sunbathing  
 Going to a motel for the night

### **Ideas for Individual Activities**

#### *Creative Activities*

Doing artwork  
 Knitting, needlework, or sewing  
 Cooking something special or new  
 Redecorating  
 Doing woodwork or carpentry  
 Doing artwork  
 Knitting, needlework, or sewing  
 Cooking something special or new

Doing pottery, ceramics  
 Taking a course in a creative skill (e.g., art, photography, cooking, or pottery)  
 Restoring furniture or antiques  
 Repairing things  
 Doing pottery, ceramics  
 Taking a course in a creative skill (e.g., art, photography, cooking, or pottery)

*(cont.)*

**FIGURE 7.5.** *(cont.)*

Redecorating  
Doing woodwork or carpentry  
Working with machines, engines, or electrical equipment  
Thinking up or arranging songs or music  
Playing a musical instrument  
Acting or taking acting lessons  
Reading books, articles, magazines related to your creative interests

Restoring furniture or antiques  
Repairing things  
Photography  
Writing  
Singing or dancing  
Learning to play a musical instrument  
Participating in an organization related to your creative interests

### *Entertainment Activities*

Watching TV  
Listening to music  
Seeing a film  
Going to an art gallery, exhibition, or museum  
Going to a sports event

Listening to the radio  
Going to a play or drama  
Going to concerts, opera, ballet  
Going to see bands play  
Going to the races (auto, boat, horse, etc.)

### *Educational Activities*

Reading books, plays, or poems  
Going to lecture courses or other classes that interest you  
Learning to do something new (e.g., acquiring a new skill)

Reading academic literature on a subject that interests you  
Learning a foreign language  
Going to the library

### *Physical Activities*

Playing tennis or squash  
Going boating or sailing  
Going hiking, mountain climbing, or camping  
Playing basketball or netball  
Going jogging, running, or bicycle riding  
Going to the gym or doing weight-lifting

Playing golf  
Going fishing  
Going swimming, diving, or surfing  
Going bowling, skating, or playing pool  
Going horseback riding  
Driving a 4WD, sports car, or motorcycle for the sheer fun of it

### *Other Activities*

Having an active involvement in politics, community, or social action groups  
Playing chess or checkers  
Collecting things (e.g., stamps, coins, or wine)  
Gardening  
Visiting interesting outdoor places (e.g., zoo, parks, riverside, harbor)  
Having or planning a holiday (on your own)  
Going to a sauna or doing health-related activities

Being involved in religious or church activities  
Speaking a foreign language  
Buying something for yourself  
Gathering natural objects (flowers, rocks, or driftwood)  
Caring for or being with animals or pets  
Being in the country or mountains  
Having massages or back rubs  
Doing yoga or meditation

**FIGURE 7.5.** *(cont.)*

Most couples have disagreements. **On your own**, check the answer that best describes how often you disagree about each area listed. Write in any other topics about which you disagree.

	<b>Always agree</b>	<b>Almost always agree</b>	<b>Occasionally disagree</b>	<b>Frequently disagree</b>	<b>Almost always disagree</b>	<b>Always disagree</b>
1. Handling family finances						
2. Matters of recreation						
3. Religious matters						
4. Demonstrations of affection						
5. Friends						
6. Sex relations						
7. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)						
8. Philosophy of life						
9. Ways of dealing with parents or in-laws						
10. Aims, goals, and things believed important						
11. Amount of time spent together						
12. Making major decisions						
13. Household tasks						
14. Leisure time interests and activities						
15. Career decisions						
16. Other (please specify): _____						
17. Other (please specify): _____						

**FIGURE 8.1.** Areas of disagreement.

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### **Approach–withdraw**

When a problem arises, one of us tries to talk about the problem (the approacher). Often the approacher will complain or criticize. The other person talks little, may not listen, leaves the room, or just refuses to discuss the issue (the withdrawer).

Does this pattern apply to you two?

- Almost all of the time
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

In approach–withdraw the demander often feels frustrated and not listened to. The withdrawer often feels attacked and may feel that talking achieves little. In approach–withdraw it is difficult to understand each other.

### **Escalate**

When we talk about a relationship problem, we tend to blame, attack, and criticize each other. We tend not to listen to each other, and things can get heated.

Does this pattern apply to you two?

- Almost all of the time
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

When couples escalate, nasty fights can result. Often problems remain unsolved, and partners frequently have hurt feelings.

### **Avoid**

When a difficult problem arises in the relationship, we do not get around to talking.

Does this pattern apply to you two?

- Almost all of the time
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

Avoidance often means conflict is not obvious, but partners can become irritated and distant from each other. The problems are rarely solved. Avoidance often occurs in response to particularly difficult issues.

### **Effective conflict management**

When a problem arises in the relationship we both talk about the problem, and hear each other out. We listen before suggesting possible solutions and compromises.

Does this pattern apply to you two?

- Almost all of the time
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

In effective conflict management, both partners are active in the discussion. Both use effective listener and speaker skills. They usually feel that they can talk about and solve problems.

**FIGURE 8.3.** Common patterns of couple conflict management.

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1. Start up slowly.
2. Use your communication skills to understand each other.
  - Hear each other out.
  - Provide specific/concrete descriptions of problem behavior.
  - Attend to and encourage each other.
  - Take turns speaking and listening.
  - Ask for feedback when in the speaker role.
3. Use the floor technique, if required.
  - One person has the floor and is the speaker.
  - The other person can only listen, no speaking.
  - Once the speaker is done he or she yields the floor to the other person.
4. Only try to solve the problem once you both understand each other's point of view.
5. When you try to solve the problem:
  - Suggest specific positive solutions.
  - Ask for your partner's suggestions.
  - Listen carefully to your partner's suggestions; do not automatically reject.

**FIGURE 8.3.** Conflict management guidelines.

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Ground rules are agreed-upon ways of managing conflict. **Below is a list of possible ground rules for handling conflict.**

**As a couple, discuss and check-mark** which ground rules you think would help you two manage conflict. There are some suggestions, and there also is room to write your own ground rules.

<p><b>1. Freedom to raise issues any time</b> Either of us can bring up an issue at any time. (As distinct from trying to find a good time and place to raise issues.)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<p><b>2. Right to reschedule</b> A partner can say, "This is not a good time." This partner should set up a time to talk soon. (You need to decide what "soon" means. Some people like to set a 24-hour limit; others leave it for a little longer.)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes Time limit: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<p><b>3. Regular relationship meetings</b> We will hold regular couple meetings when we are relaxed and alert.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<p><b>4. Under stress, focus on the immediate issue</b> Under stress, we deal with the immediate issue on the spot, then talk about the larger relationship issue later at our couple meeting or at a time we set.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<p><b>5. Use of problem-solving sheet</b> Sometimes we can use a written problem-solving sheet to help stay focused on the topic under discussion. (Note: A sample problem-solving sheet is available for you to look at.)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<p><b>6. Clear agenda</b> We can agree sometimes to discuss just <i>one</i> issue at a relationship meeting.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<p><b>7. Understand, then solve</b> When discussing a problem we first try to listen to each other about the nature of the problem. Suggestions to solve the problem will come only after we understand each other's point of view.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<p><b>8. Use of stop</b> If we start to become angry or upset either one of us can call a brief "stop." This means taking a few minutes off, like a mini-"time-out." The stop gives a few minutes to reflect, and to try to talk more calmly.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<p><b>9. Use of time-out</b> If we start to become angry or upset either one of us can call a "time-out." The partner who calls the "time-out" will schedule a time soon to talk more, when he or she is feeling calmer.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<p><b>10. Your ground rule (1):</b> _____ _____</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<p><b>11. Your ground rule (2):</b> _____ _____</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

**FIGURE 8.4.** Ground rules for good conflict management.

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This problem-solving sheet is used when you have a difficult problem to solve. First, define the problem. Write down each partner's point of view and a "joint" point of view. It may take some discussion to come up with a "joint" point of view. Then generate some possible solutions to the problem. Next, think about the pros (positives) and cons (negatives) for each possible solution. Finally, choose the solution that best suits you as a couple.

1. Define the issue (define clearly, specifically, positively):

Partner 1's point of view: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Partner 2's point of view: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Joint point of view: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Generate options	3. Evaluate options	
	Advantages	Disadvantages
a.		
b.		
c.		

4. Select solution: \_\_\_\_\_

**FIGURE 8.5.** Couple problem-solving sheet.

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**On your own . . .** Place a check mark in the box that best describes how *you* think it went during the discussion. (Remember, you won't necessarily use all these skills.)

- 0 No use of this skill
- 1 Some use of this skill
- 2 Adequate but there is room for improvement
- 3 Good use of this skill
- N/A Skill not applicable

	Skill	0	1	2	3	N/A
<b>Conflict skills</b>	Listen before offering solutions					
	Listening and speaking about equally					
<b>Speaker Skills</b>	Describe specifics					
	Express positives					
	Assert negatives					
	Self-disclose feelings					
<b>Listener skills</b>	Attend					
	Encourage					
	Summarize content					
	Paraphrase feelings					
	Ask questions					
	Hear your partner out					
<b>Couple ground rules</b>	Use written problem-solving sheet					
	Stay with an agenda of one issue					
	Use the floor technique					
	I called a time-out					
	I called a brief stop					
	Other ground rule (write in):					

My strengths in managing conflict are: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Things I want to work on in managing conflict are: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**FIGURE 8.6.** Conflict skills self-evaluation form.

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Negative thoughts	Positive thoughts
"How could she/he do this to me?"	"What was the issue we were trying to resolve?"
"(Partner) is being stupid/unfair/cruel."	"What was I thinking that led me to feel so upset/angry?"
"(Partner) should not talk to me like that."	"What did I say or do that was helpful to talking this through?"
"Why is (partner) not seeing he or she is wrong?"	"What did I do that was unhelpful during the discussion?"
"I hate it when this happens."	"Take slow, deep breaths, calm myself down."
"It's pointless, we'll never work this out."	"What can I say or do differently when we talk about this again?"

**FIGURE 8.7.** Negative and positive thinking after conflict.

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1. Many people feel a bit uncomfortable when talking about sex. If you find such discussion difficult, it can be useful to tell this to your partner.
2. Only disclose as much in your writing and speaking as you feel comfortable with.
3. Sometimes it helps to tell your partner things about your past experience of sex so that he or she can understand your current feelings.
4. Some people find it hard to hear about their partner's prior sexual experiences. It often is unhelpful to give lots of detail about prior sexual experiences.
5. Respect your spouse's privacy: do not read what he or she has written or push him or her to speak about things if he or she feels uncomfortable.
6. There might be topics you want to discuss with your spouse, but not with me as an educator. That is OK. In the rest of the session when you are speaking as a couple I will only come over if you raise your hand and ask me to.
7. Please spread yourselves out and use the room available. Do not listen in on each other's conversations.
8. I will not ask people to report the content of their conversation with their spouse to the group, unless they want to do that.

**FIGURE 9.1.** Guidelines when discussing sex with your partner.

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**On your own**, write down your thoughts about the following areas.

### Childhood

What did your parents and any brothers or sisters communicate to you about sex? Did they talk about sex much? Did they talk about sex positively or negatively?

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*"I learned about sex from my older sisters—it was something naughty and exotic—my sisters called it "the deed." I thought sex was probably good but you didn't talk about it. I still find it a bit hard to talk about sex with my partner, even though he is very open about it. It's something I'm working on."*—Lee, 34, married 3 years to Rob, 28

*"My parents were hippies, always wandering around naked. It was pretty embarrassing. So I just didn't like to talk with them about sex."*—Shane, 28

### Adolescence

What was your parents' attitude toward you and sex in your teenage years? Were they strict? Easygoing? Punishing?

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*"My dad didn't want to talk to me about sex. He just gave me a bunch of men's magazines when I was 14. I thought that sex was an all-night festival of the flesh. But that's not how it was, not at all the first time. I felt like a dismal failure as a man. Later on I talked to my friend. I worked out I wasn't the only one who felt that way."*—Rob, 28, married 3 years to Lee, 34

*"My mom was very open, cool about sex. I was the only one at school who really understood about condoms. But my dad, if a boy so much as looked at me, dad would jump on him. I never brought boys home, it would have been a nightmare."*—Angela, 44

(cont.)

**FIGURE 9.2.** Reflections on early learning experiences.

What about friends? Did you see yourself as more or less sexually active than your friends? What was the craziest thing anyone ever tried to tell you about sex?

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*"I had a girlfriend who told me you wouldn't get pregnant if you did it standing up. But she was always in the back of some guy's car, so I couldn't see how she could stand up."—Natalie, 19*

*"At school the other guys were always boasting about what they did on the weekend. You know, claiming to have had lots of sex and all that. Looking back I am sure they were full of it, but at the time I felt I was the only guy missing out."—Glenn, 39*

### Other Experiences

How have other experiences influenced your attitudes to sex? How have you decided what is OK/not OK for you?

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*"Paolo is sensitive to my likes and dislikes. He is OK and does not take it personally if I don't feel like sex. Being with him has made me a more demanding lover. I never used to start sex before, now I do. And I ask what he likes. Which made me a better lover too. At least I hope so!"—Natasha, 34, partner to Paolo, 32, for 4 years*

### Today

What attitudes do you have now that help your sex life with your partner?

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What attitudes (if any) do you have now that do not help your sex life with your partner?

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**As a couple**, talk to each other about any of the aspects of what you have written down that you wish to share with your partner. Focus in particular on the positive things you bring to your sexual relationship.

On your own, read through the following sexual beliefs. Indicate whether you think the belief is true or not by writing a T for "true" or an F for "false" beside each belief

Belief	True or false?
1. True sexual enjoyment means having an orgasm.	
2. If you are really in love sex will be really good almost all the time.	
3. My body should be perfect in order to have a good sex life.	
4. Only intercourse is real sex.	
5. Sometimes you can enjoy sex without achieving orgasm.	
6. Male impotence is always a sign of serious problems.	
7. Men come too fast and women too slowly.	
8. Men need sex more often than women.	
9. If your relationship is good, you should both feel like sex at the same time.	
10. You do not have to be physically fit to enjoy sex.	
11. Almost all couples have times when only one partner feels like sex.	
12. Most women experience discomfort or even pain sometimes during sex.	
13. If your partner ever masturbates, something is wrong with your sex life.	
14. After the birth of a baby, a couple's sex life pretty much stops for a year.	
15. By the time people are 50–60 years of age they lose interest in sex.	

**FIGURE 9.3.** Common sexual beliefs.

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## Orgasms and Sex

Sex does not have to be just about reaching orgasm. Sex is about lots of things. Sex can be relaxing and sensual without having an orgasm. Sex can be about giving pleasure to your partner. Sex can be expressing how you feel.

For most women orgasm does not occur every time they have sex. In fact, only one-third of women say they reach climax from intercourse “most of the time.” Another third of women say they reach orgasm “some of the time,” and a third say they “rarely or never” reach orgasm during intercourse.

Most men do reach orgasm most of the time with intercourse. But it is common for men not to reach orgasm from time to time.

If you never or hardly ever have orgasm, you might want to try to change this. There is no correct or normal way to be. If you are satisfied with your current sex life and how often you achieve orgasm, then that is fine. If you are not satisfied, there are things you can try to enhance your sexual enjoyment. Your relationship educator can give you advice.

## How Good Does Sex Have to Be?

In all relationships sex varies. More than likely sometimes sex will be great, sometimes just OK, and much of the time sex will be pretty good. Sex tends to be better more of the time in relationships where the couple:

- Do their best to stay fit and healthy.
- Spend time on being romantic and having special couple time.
- Make time for sex to be leisurely.
- The relationship as a whole is working well.

Even when all these things are present, couples will still get tired from time to time, or feel stressed or not in the mood. The important things are to have realistic expectations, and then to assess whether sex in your relationship is usually good enough.

## Physical Appearance and Sex

Most models look rotten in the morning. The glamour seen in magazines and movies is mainly good lighting and makeup. No one has perfect looks.

A good sex life usually means we need to accept how we look. If you hate your body or how it looks, it can be hard to have a good sex life. At the same time people who are physically healthy and stay in shape tend to have better sex lives. Making an effort to look healthy for yourself and your partner is a good thing.

(cont.)

**FIGURE 9.4.** Some useful information for discussing common sexual beliefs.

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If you feel uncomfortable with how you look naked, talk this over with your relationship educator.

### **Intercourse and Other Aspects of Sex**

Happy couples tend to have a wide variety of sexual and sensual things they do together. Sometimes a cuddle, massage, or petting can be fun and can express sensual and sexual feelings without intercourse.

There are times when options other than intercourse can be good. Some couples like oral sex or mutual masturbation for variety.

Sometimes intercourse is not a good option. For example, some couples dislike intercourse when the woman has her period. For a time after childbirth, sex may be uncomfortable for the woman. At such times other forms of sex, such as mutual touching, can be good.

On the other hand, some people feel they need great variety to have really experienced sex. It is important that the sexual behaviors couples use are acceptable to both partners. For example, if one partner does not like oral sex, that does not stop the couple from having a great sex life.

### **Matching Desired Frequency of Sex**

Everyone varies in how sexy they feel. Everyone has days when he or she is too tired, or just does not feel that way. So it is impossible for one partner to always desire sex at the same time as the other partner.

It is important that the couple find ways of signaling to each other when they do feel like sex. And it is important to respect when your partner does not feel like sex.

If one partner does not feel like sex at a particular time, masturbation can provide release. Most people do masturbate from time to time.

### **Sexual Problems Like Pain or Impotence**

Impotence is the inability to get or keep an erection during sex. Many men are impotent from time to time. Sometimes impotence is caused by a clear medical problem. Other times psychological factors can cause impotence. For example, stress and too much to drink can cause impotence. If impotence is causing problems in your relationship, talk to a doctor. Many impotence problems can now be treated.

Discomfort during intercourse can occur in women from time to time. The most common type of discomfort is rubbing at the entrance to the vagina caused by vaginal dryness, which can be managed with better attention to foreplay or use of lubricants. However, persistent discomfort or severe pain should not be ignored. This can have a variety of causes such as a vaginal infection or a more serious medical condition. If you do have persistent discomfort or pain, see your doctor.

*(cont.)*

**FIGURE 9.4.** *(cont.)*

### **Differences in Men's and Women's Sexual Response**

Individuals vary greatly in how quickly they become aroused, and by what. It is common for men to achieve orgasm during intercourse more quickly than women, but this varies from time to time and from couple to couple. Try to make sure that sex occurs when both partners are interested. Foreplay needs to be arousing for both partners. This requires letting each other know what is pleasurable. If there are differences in how quickly each of you reaches orgasm, and if this is a problem in your relationship, talk to your relationship educator.

### **Differences in Men's and Women's Sexual Desire**

Interest in sex varies between people, and for each person from one time to another. On average across all men and women, men tend to desire intercourse more often than women. Developing ways to negotiate having sex at a frequency and in ways that are acceptable to each partner makes for a good relationship.

**FIGURE 9.4.** *(cont.)*

**On your own,** answer the following questions:

1. Over the last few months we have had sex:

- 6–7 days per week
- 3–5 days per week
- Once or twice per week
- Every 2–3 weeks
- Once per month or less

2. How often we have had sex over the last few months is:

- Much more often than I like
- A little bit more often than I like
- About right
- A bit less often than I like
- Much less often than I would like

3. Who initiates sex in your relationship?

- Me, most of the time we have sex
- Both of us, but me more often
- Both of us, about equally
- Both of us, but my partner more often
- My partner, most of the time we have sex

4. When you do initiate sex with your partner, what do you most often say or do?

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5. When your partner initiates sex with you, what does he or she most often say or do?

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**As a couple,** discuss your answers. Write down your thoughts about your current strengths and areas to work on with respect to how you work out how often you have sex.

Strengths about how we decide how often to have sex: \_\_\_\_\_

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Areas to work on: \_\_\_\_\_

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**FIGURE 9.5.** How often we have sex and how we feel about it.

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On your own, place a check mark in the appropriate box.

Activity	Love the way we do it now	It's pretty good as it is	It's OK but we could make it better	Haven't done this, I would like to try it	I don't want to do this
Having a long hug with my partner					
My partner and I looking into each other's eyes					
Giving my partner a back rub					
Having my partner give me a back rub					
Giving my partner a foot massage					
Having my partner give me a foot massage					
Initiating sex with my partner					
Having my partner initiate sex					
Kissing each other for more than 1 minute					
Telling my partner my fantasies					
Having my partner tell me his or her fantasies					
Giving my partner a nongenital massage					
Receiving a nongenital massage					
Caressing my partner's nipples/other nongenital area he or she finds stimulating with my hands or lips Area: _____					

(cont.)

**FIGURE 9.6.** Sexual preferences form.

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<b>Activity</b>	<b>Love the way we do it now</b>	<b>It's pretty good as it is</b>	<b>It's OK but we could make it better</b>	<b>Haven't done this, I would like to try it</b>	<b>I don't want to do this</b>
Having my partner caress my nipples/other nongenital area with her or his hands or lips Area: _____					
Caressing my partner's genitals with my hands					
Having my partner caress my genitals with his or her hands					
Giving my partner oral sex					
Receiving oral sex from my partner					
Giving and receiving oral sex simultaneously with my partner					
Watching my partner masturbate					
Having my partner watch me masturbate					
Mutual masturbation					
Having intercourse in the following positions (fill in) 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____					
Having sex away from home					
Having dress-up/role-play sex					
Other: _____					
Other: _____					

**FIGURE 9.6.** (cont.)

<b>Planning for Change: Example</b> Change: <u>Naomi is starting a new full-time job next month.</u>		
<b>1. Direct effects of change</b>	<b>2. Possible effects on our relationship</b>	<b>3. Our plan to deal with relationship effects</b>
1. Naomi will have less time to attend to cleaning and cooking. 2. We'll have more money. 3. Naomi will probably be more tired than now; she may need time to adjust to the demands of her new job. 4. We will both be busier.	1. Naomi cannot easily keep doing all her current chores. If she did she might feel resentful. John will find it hard doing more of the chores. 2. We'll be able to save or spend money differently. 3. Naomi might feel the need for support from John. 4. Having less time to talk may stress us.	1. We need to develop new routines for getting chores done. We need to agree on who does what. We need to talk this one through. 2. We could spend our money in lots of ways (e.g., save for a mortgage, get a cleaner to help with chores). We need to agree on priorities and on a budget. We may need to organize for cleaners to come in each week. 3. John will take care to have regular couple time to talk to Naomi. 4. Both of us need to remember that this is a time of change and may be stressful at first. We need to have a regular date to have fun.

<b>Planning for Change</b> Change: _____		
<b>1. Direct effects of change</b>	<b>2. Possible effects on our relationship</b>	<b>3. Our plan to deal with relationship effects</b>

**FIGURE 10.2.** Planning for life changes.

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<b>Change</b>	<b>Within 2 years?</b>	<b>Within 10 years?</b>
One partner changing to a different job		
More responsibility at work		
Changing home within same city/area		
Changing home to a new city/area		
A partner finishing a course or other training		
A partner starting a course or other training		
Birth of a child		
A relative needing special care		
Major purchase (e.g., home or business)		
A partner staying home from paid work		
A major change in social activities		
A major change in sporting activities		
A major change in artistic activities		
Retirement		
Other:		
Other:		

**FIGURE 10.3.** Identifying and managing likely changes in our life together.

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- Assembling and looking through together photographs of important relationship events, such as holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, and family gatherings.
- A weekend away for just the two of you.
- A weekend at home together when you don't see anyone else, and you do fun things together that you would not usually do.
- A date during which you tell each other about the importance of your relationship together.
- Cooking a special meal for your partner and telling him or her how special he or she is.
- Having a glass of wine or cup of coffee together and catching up on the day's happenings.
- Planning fun time together, such as a holiday or special outing.
- Working on a fun project together.
- Planning a special meal to celebrate a birthday or anniversary.
- Getting out the diary and booking a special couple activity.
- Getting together with extended family to celebrate your relationship.
- Sending a card to your partner telling him or her how you feel about him or her.
- Doing a community service activity together.

**FIGURE 10.4.** Couple relationship celebration rituals.

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Skills	Do I know?	Important?	My pick(s)
<b>Self-change</b>			
Develop and discuss relationship vision			
Use five-step self-change plan			
<b>Communication</b>			
Describe specifics			
Express positives			
Assert negatives			
Self-disclose feelings			
Attend			
Encourage			
Summarize content			
Paraphrase feelings			
Ask questions			
Hear your partner out			
<b>Caring and intimacy</b>			
<b>Emotion-focused support</b>			
Help partner express feelings			
Encourage, reassure, give affection			
<b>Problem-focused support</b>			
Help define the problem			
Suggest specific plan of action			
Offer partner specific assistance			
Ask what sort of support is needed			

(cont.)

**FIGURE 10.5.** Key couple care relationship skills.

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<b>Skills</b>	<b>Do I know?</b>	<b>Important?</b>	<b>My pick(s)</b>
<b>Caring and fun activities</b>			
Show day-to-day acts of caring			
Keep novelty and variety in caring behaviors			
Maintaining good balance of individual and couple activities			
<b>Managing differences</b>			
Don't try to solve the problem too quickly			
Use the floor technique			
Hear your partner out			
When listening, give feedback			
When speaking, ask for feedback			
Attend and encourage			
Describe problems specifically			
Make specific positive requests for change			
Use conflict management guidelines			
Hold relationship meetings			
<b>Sex</b>			
Express preferences			
Balance responsibility for initiating			
<b>Looking ahead</b>			
Plan for change			
Celebrate the relationship			
Monitor for early warning signs, discuss any issues			
Respond to early warning signs of problems			

**FIGURE 10.5.** *(cont.)*