How to create a

"Let's Work on Our Relationship"

Contract

By Marlon Familton, MA LMHC

Author of Fix Your Partner in 10 Easy Steps or Less!

Copyright © 2015 Marlon Familton All Rights Reserved

One of the most wonderful and motivating aspects of being in a good relationship is to feel the calmness and security it brings. To feel as though, "We are in this together. I have your back and trust that you have mine." Partners who nurture each other and the relationship will usually wind up with a strong relationship. This means checking in with each other to talk about the health of the relationship, expressing needs and responding to each other. This is what the "work" of relationships is all about. If only it were so easy!

Unfortunately there are many occasions when one partner is "working on the relationship", while the other is busy being angry, resentful and distant. That is what I wrote to help change in my book, Fix Your Partner in 10 Easy Steps or Less. The book is filled with clear steps to get your partner on board to make adjustments and changes in your relationship to ensure it works for the long haul.

Right now I am assuming your partner is on board with the idea of making things better. I want to give you two simple yet productive steps that can help you feel focused and better *today*. These steps will lead you to a happier and more secure relationship.

Step One: Identify Three Things to Work on

The first step is for each of you to identify three things you want your partner to work on and commit to each other that you will. In a moment I will offer up a list of suggestions that you and your partner can use to select your three requests for each other. Feel free to write your own. There are just a couple rules to follow.

1. Your requests have to be a "do" not a "don't". For instance, let's say you want them to stop raising their voice. "Don't raise your voice" is a don't. Your partner can't do a don't. Instead, make it a "do" like this, "talk calmly to me." This is important because no likes to be told what to do. "Don't" feels like an order. "Do" is a request.

2. Your request has to be specific. If you said, "I want you to respect me", you will find that is too vague to do. Instead be specific, "Call me when you are making dinner to see if I am able to make it home in time." Or, "Involve me in decisions about spending money."

Copyright © 2015 Marlon Familton All Rights Reserved

Step Two: Express Gratitude Every Day

The second step is for you both to share grateful thoughts about the other's efforts, daily. Yes, every day. We all love to be seen, heard, validated, acknowledged and appreciated. If you are working on your part of the relationship, I am sure you will agree that it will feel good to be acknowledged for that effort. Your partner needs this too.

This expression of gratitude will lead to motivation. When your partner makes an effort to follow through and you express gratitude for their efforts, they will feel good. When you help them feel good, they will want more of those good feelings. An association grows in their brain between the action and your expression of gratitude. Hopefully their gratitude is doing the same for you.

To express gratitude every day, have a specific time when you spend a few minutes together. Right before bed is a good time. So is first thing in the morning. Take turns expressing gratitude for two things about your partner. Ideally you will focus in on acknowledging each other's efforts to meet needs, follow through, and support the relationship. Being grateful for having a job you love, doesn't cut it. Expressing gratitude that your partner supports your job by being patient when you work late, does.

A few simple rules to ensure success

1. Only express gratitude. This is not a time to talk about other issues in the relationship, nor is it time to ask for something different.
2. Focus on your partner and their efforts, not other people or things.
3. Keep it short and simple. Lots of words dilute the impact.
4. Always say, "Thank you for noticing" after each expression of gratitude.

Follow this simple model by filling in the blank:

"I am grateful that you, _____."

"Thank you for noticing."

Copyright © 2015 Marlon Familton All Rights Reserved

List of Ideas

Here are some suggestions for things you may want your partner to work on. These are a bit generic, so definitely fine tune them to be more specific for your needs. Feel free to create your own. Some of the obvious relationship rules like, No criticizing or name calling can be found in my Rules of Engagement document at www.fixyourpartner.com.

Come home on time

Follow through with agreements

Keep your voice calm

Let me know you love me

Acknowledge me

Compliment me

Spend more time with me

Do more chores

Help with the kids

Take me on a date

Finish a project

Connect with me before you leave for work

Cuddle with me

Be willing to be intimate

Initiate intimacy

Tell me if you are upset

Include me in decisions about money

Take ownership and apologize when you hurt me

Work on validating me and being empathetic

Copyright © 2015 Marlon Familton All Rights Reserved

Our Contract for building a Secure and Loving Relationship

Out of the desire to create a secure and loving relationship, we each hereby pledge and promise to make a sincere and consistent effort to work on our relationship and make time every day to express gratitude for each other.

.

I _____, from a place of love and joy, promise to work on the following requests:

1. I will

2. I will

3. I will

I will take ownership if I do not follow through. I will express gratitude when my partner does.

Signed with love,

_____

I _____, from a place of love and joy, promise to work on the following requests:

1. I will

2. I will

3. I will

I will take ownership if I do not follow through. I will express gratitude when my partner does.

Signed with love,

_____

Copyright © 2015 Marlon Familton All Rights Reserved