

Prescription for a Happy Relationship

- Stop expecting things from each other.
- Realize you can't read your partner's mind, and she/he can't read yours. Speak up. Listen with an open mind and heart.
- Accept your partner exactly as she/he is.
- Don't worry so much about understanding or being understood. Ask for acceptance, and accept your partner's experience as valid.
- Ask for what you want, and then graciously accept the response, yes or no. Take good care of yourself.
- Stop "making your case" as if there were a judge there who will decide who's "right." Whatever you're saying, your partner has heard it before. Whatever you're demanding, the answer is *No*.
- Find out from your partner what makes him/her feel loved, appreciated, respected, cherished, accepted, valuable. Write it all down. Every day, do at least one thing on the list.
- Try to be good, stop trying to be right.
- Figure out the problems that are not going to be solved, and stop talking about them.
- Do the things around the house that *you* want done, and accept what gets left undone. If you really believe your partner isn't doing her/his share, have a conversation about it. Write down everything required to run the household and figure out how to handle the responsibilities. Then tend to your own jobs and *really* release your partner's.
- When you need to bring up something that's bothering you, start gently and amiably. "This issue is a problem for me. How can we make it work better?" Remember you're a team.
- Honor each other's efforts. Be encouraging.
- Spend time together relaxing, doing fun things, with *and* without the children. Laugh a *lot*.
- Have a life apart from your partner - friends, interests, activities.
- Learn about each other: childhood experiences, plans for the future, hopes and dreams, undeveloped talents, likes and dislikes. Get to know each other's friends and family.
- Get conscious and specific about money, childrearing, spiritual needs, household issues, your vision of the future, and anything else that needs deciding. Write things down.

- Look for what's positive, good, life-affirming, joyous.
- Learn from your mistakes. If it's not working, stop doing it.
- Know how you feel and express it. Check to make sure your partner's interpretation is close to your own. Don't assume.
- Instead of asking what's wrong, just make an observation. For example, "You look upset." Then be available to listen calmly. Only give advice if it's requested.
- When something's not going the way you want, ask yourself, "What can I do differently?" rather than demanding change from your partner.
- Be responsive to loving gestures, even in the middle of a fight.
- Don't be provoked. If your partner is behaving badly, try to see the uncomfortable thought or feeling beneath the behavior, and respond to that thought or feeling with acceptance and unconditional love.
- During a fight, use words like,

I know you love me.

It's important to me that you hear what I'm saying.

I know we can work this out.

Thanks for hanging in there with me.

Even though we have this problem we can't seem to solve, we'll be fine. There's so much good here.

Let's take a time out.

Let's resume this conversation later and just go take a walk (watch a movie, go get ice cream, go swimming....)

Indulge me for just a minute or two.

It's so great that we can really talk about the important stuff.

I see our life together getting better and better.

You are really important to me.

I have a complaint about this situation. I have some ideas about how to make it better and want to hear your ideas, too.