

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.
- 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.

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.