

Shrink Rap: Save your marriage: Part 3

Dr. John Gottman's conducted research at the University of Washington in Seattle. In his lab, he was able to observe couples as they went about their day to day activities. After collecting data about their relationship, and their physiological response to stressors, he offered them the opportunity to learn new skills. These skills are what he calls the Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work.

Principle #1: Enhance Your Love Maps. In emotionally health relationships couples are intimately familiar with each others' world – their likes, dislikes, fears, joys, stresses, passions. They remember major events in each others' lives, and have a sense of who that person is in character, belief systems, and values. They know the others life goals, hopes and dreams.

Knowledge is strength. Couples' who know their “Love Maps” are better equipped to weather marital storms. They have coping skills and can deal with stressful events and conflict far better than those who do not know one another so deeply.

To develop strong Love Maps, you must make quality time with your partner a priority. No matter how busy you are take time to catch up on the events of the day. Set aside regular time to talk about each others deepest longings, beliefs, and fears. Listen openly, just to get to know your partner, how they think, and how they experience the world. Be in tune to the feelings behind opinions and values. Reflect upon how the two of you can work together to meet your goals as a couple as well as individuals.

In Dr. Gottman's book “The Seven Principles of Making Marriage Work” he offers the Love Map Questionnaires. The questionnaires help couples explore what they know and don't know about their partner. The questionnaires also guide each individual to explore their own triumphs and strivings, injuries and healing, emotional world, mission and legacy, and who they strive to become as a person.

Love mapping is a life-long process, and just one step in healing a hurting marriage. Get started on your love mapping today. Make time to have intimate conversation with your spouse.

Next, we will explore Principle #2: Nurturing Your Fondness and Admiration.

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