



DEVELOPING AND ENRICHING INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

LOOKING AHEAD

After completing this chapter, you will be able to

- Explain love and the various types of love.
- Recognize obstacles to love.
- Explain the relationship growth and needs fulfillment theory.
- Discuss the barriers, benefits, and development of intimacy.
- Identify ideas for sexual fulfillment.
- Explain marriage in terms of definition and images.
- Tell how couples can prepare for marriage.
- Explain several factors related to marital success.
- Realize that relationships end and explain how couples can go their separate ways in a manner that will benefit both parties.

From “I and “me” to “us” and “we.” Your relationships will be as vital and alive as you are. Love is life in all of its aspects and if you miss love, you miss life. Please don’t.

—Leo Buscaglia

“I love you” is a statement that is responsible for experiences of joy as well as despair. To love and be loved is desired by all human beings. Two intriguing books, *Love and Survival* (Ornish, 1998) and *A Cry Unheard* (Lynch, 2000), present evidence that love and interpersonal relationships are critical elements in our health and well-being.

To achieve intimacy within a relationship is to realize the deepest meaning of love. How much do you know about love and intimacy? If you have had little education in these areas, you are not alone. Intimacy has been either ignored or assumed to be so natural that thinking or talking about it is unnecessary. Or it has been incorrectly defined as sexual relations. Consequently, people may have difficulty with their intimate relationships. This chapter will delve into love and intimate relationships. You can use it as a springboard to education in what, for most people, are the most important aspects of their lives.

What is Love?

In writing, music, painting, and the performing arts, love is a major theme. In recent years, research has contributed to our understanding of love. Books and courses are available to help people make wise decisions about love and intimacy. Does studying love take away from the spontaneity or uniqueness of a relationship? "This does not seem very romantic to me," grumbled a woman when she was asked to answer questions about her love relationship. Regardless of one's perception of what is romantic, knowledge and understanding of love and intimacy build a strong foundation for a meaningful relationship.

Love is an art (Fromm, 1956). If you want to have a fulfilling love relationship, first acquire information about love. Meeting the right person does not teach us to love. We must learn about love just as we must learn about other skills (Wegscheider-Cruse, 1988). Because love varies from one culture to another, varies in meaning from one era to another, and even shifts within a single relationship as individuals mature, definitive answers may be impossible. However, we can identify obstacles, types, and components of love as well as important elements of intimacy.

Identifying Obstacles to Love and Intimacy

Individuals can want to love and be loved and still fail miserably. At times, they believe that they are in love, and the results are disappointing and painful. You can shift the odds in the favor of success if you know the potential obstacles.

Low Self-Esteem

The foundation for all love relationships is self-love. The eloquent expressions of other writers concerning the relationship between self-esteem and healthy love for another can benefit anyone who desires a love relationship.

A positive self-image, a sturdy self-esteem, and a love of self set us free to love others. (Viorst, 1986, p. 55)

The first love affair we must consummate successfully is the love affair with ourselves. Without respect for who I am and enjoyment in what I am, I have very little to give. If I do not feel that I am lovable, it is very difficult to believe that anyone else loves me. (Branden and Branden, 1982, p. 40)

One who seeks in another the sense of worth one cannot find in oneself is likely to be disappointed. We cannot find salvation in a relationship. (Sternberg, 1987, p. 275)

Why is low self-esteem so detrimental to love relationships? Sandra Murray states that people with low self-esteem are doubly at risk of feeling vulnerable in a relationship (*Psychology Today*, 1999). When a relationship fails, self-worth diminishes even further. Either an individual will be needy and feel helpless in the grips of passionate love or will devalue the other. Two women describe low self-esteem problems:

Luanne: As I grew and changed, he did all he could to knock me down. He was insecure and could not stand the thought of my growing and being able to manage without him. I hate to admit that it worked. I easily slipped back to our old roles. I can see now where my low self-esteem allowed him to continue to rule me. After almost 10 years and 2 children, I decided I could not take it and left.

Elizabeth: My relationship with my ex-husband could easily be described as “walking on eggshells.” I analyzed my thoughts before speaking and was not negative about anything (due to his low self-esteem). I felt my self-worth being dragged down to his level. This is ironic considering it was my optimism and strong sense of self that drew him to me. I finally realized I had to get out to save “me.”

Low self-esteem sets the stage for unhealthy behaviors, including manipulation, unfair fighting, extreme negative reactions to criticism, and extended periods of silence, temper tantrums, and abuse. People with low self-esteem feel unworthy of love. They believe that sooner or later, they will lose their lover. Because of their fear of rejection, they frequently bring about the very situation they dread. Their lives become self-fulfilling prophecies (Porat, 1988).

In contrast, high self-esteem creates an attitude that you deserve the finest. This belief influences your behavior and the outcome. Mark confided: “I always said I could never live without her, but I have found that I can. This class has helped me a lot because it has taught me that I deserve better than her.” Margaret reported a dramatic experience.

I used to hate myself. I was told that I was not good enough, was stupid, and would never amount to anything. In six years my ex-husband gave me 27 fractures, killed my second baby in utero, and then started on my daughter when she was less than two years of age. In order for him to feel powerful, he would bring me down to his level or lower. Then a “feeling” came over me. It wasn’t me who was all these things; it was him. I finally realized I was a worthwhile person. I loved and trusted myself enough not to need his sick love, and I sneaked out with baby in my arms.

Margaret learned an essential lesson—that she deserved much better. *Being* the right person is what is important—not *finding* the right person (Ornish, 1998). You can eliminate a major barrier to a healthy love relationship by raising your self-esteem level and choosing a partner who values herself or himself.

Extensive Giving and Addiction

“If you love, you give and give and give” is a belief that persists. “Sacrifice is what love is all about” was the resigned explanation of a 56-year-old woman who did not appear to be loved or loving. Women accepted and lived the sacrificial role more often than men. The past influences the present, and in spite of women’s quest for equality and independence, the tendency for many women is to give more than men do. These thoughts are reflected in comments from young female students.

Lisa: I found myself constantly building him up and reassuring him of my love at my expense.

Staci: The part of me that attracted him to me in the beginning I unknowingly gave up. That was ME, my personality, my independence, my self-security.

I was, I thought, so much in love, and to show it, I tried to be everything I thought he wanted me to be. In doing so, I was no longer ME, the person he was attracted to.

Jill: I was so in love with him that I forgot the things I wanted and focused only on what he wanted.

Addictive and codependent relationships have usually focused on women's loving too much. Men do not necessarily equate this endless giving with love and often grow to resent it. Men don't feel grateful; they feel suffocated (Cowan and Kinder, 1987).

For both sexes, a cultural factor is Americans' preoccupation with obsessive and violent love (White and Bondurant, 1996). Novels, television, movies, and music depict love-crazed individuals who resort to aggression and violent acts in the name of love. Although the obsessed person may call his or her addiction "love," obsessive love has little to do with real love (Forward, 1991). One of the greatest stress producers is the feeling of subservience and lack of control that is characteristic of obsessive love.

Relationships that are based on misconceptions of love take their toll. In addition to psychological costs, a pressing concern in American society is abuse—whether it's physical, sexual, or emotional—that is found in addictive and obsessive relationships. An enlightening book on the subject is *When Men Batter Women: New Insights into Ending Abusive Relationships* (Jacobson and Gottman, 1998a). Those who are highly dependent on their partners seem to tolerate more physical violence. Sharon, who entered college at age 41, expressed it candidly:

Being married to an abusive alcoholic left nothing for "me." There simply was no "me." There was only what he wanted. My basic need was mere survival.

Recent attention has focused on intimate or "common-couple" violence among heterosexuals. This type is engaged in equally by both men and women. The difference is that women are more likely to be injured than men (DeMaris, 2001). Violence is also present in the relationships of same-sex couples, although incidents are rarely reported (Huwig, 2001). Depending on the survey, 17 percent to 46 percent of lesbians and gay men report abuse by a current or former partner (Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, 2003). A sobering finding is that battering seldom stops on its own (Jacobson and Gottman, 1998b). Couples who truly care about their relationship do not put it at risk by physically hurting each other.

Verbal aggression is an even more common type of abuse. **Verbal aggression** is verbal or nonverbal communication intended to cause psychological pain to another person or communication perceived as having that intent. Obsessive love and a verbally abusive relationship share characteristics of inequality, manipulation, hostility, and control. For a review of how to handle verbal abuse, see Chapter 10.

Why would anyone remain in an abusive relationship? The answers are not simple. Reasons given by abused persons who stay in an abusive relationship are lack of financial resources, lack of job security, fear of losing their children, lack of support services in the community, and fear of being alone. Immigrants may fear losing immigrant status and being deported. Some experts believe that women can suffer from what is called **battered woman syndrome**, a type of posttraumatic stress disorder. After so much abuse, they are stripped of self-esteem and falsely

believe they need their husbands in order to survive (Jacobson and Gottman, 1998a). Violence at the hands of a partner adversely affects the victim's sense of control (Umberson et al., 1998), making it extremely difficult to break the cycle. Debra described her experience as follows:

I gave, and he took. I became his "mother," someone to take care of him and solve his problems. I thought that was what love truly meant, that I would only be important if I was needed by and doing for someone else. My needs or wants never entered my mind. I just plain did not exist. He did not want me to work, and he "hit on" every female I brought to the house so I stopped associating with my friends. I did not trust him to care for the children for even an hour on his own so I stayed home. He kept me where he wanted me, and I let him. I despised the fact that even when he hurt me to the point I could not see because my eyes were swollen shut or could not talk because my jaw was broken, I still did not have enough courage to move out. It seems now that I never blamed him—only me—which was fine with him. He got fired from one of many jobs, slammed me against a wall, and I packed his bags. He left, and later the hospital called. He had tried to kill himself. I remember going to see him, and the first words I spoke were, "What have I done?" I let Debra be destroyed.

Fortunately, Debra became strong enough to leave, return to school, and begin a new life.

Although most people view only women as the victims in an abusive relationship, research indicates that males can be victims of relationship violence. In his 1975 and 1985 National Family Violence Surveys, Straus (*Psychology Today*, 1999) stated that 12.4 percent of women have assaulted their spouses, compared to 12.2 percent of men. When it comes to severe assaults, the numbers were 4.6 percent for women and 5 percent for men. Irene Frieze (*Psychology Today*, 1999) conducted a survey of college students in dating situations. Of the college students she surveyed, 58 percent of women had assaulted their dates compared to 55 percent of men. Men tend not to report spousal abuse at the same rate as women; partly because they diminish the impact themselves and partly because society, media, police, and courts also tend to diminish its impact.

To see if you may be involved in an abusive relationship, honestly answer the following questions (Forward and Torres, 1986):

- Does the person assume the right to control how you live and behave?
- Have you given up important activities or people in your life in order to keep this person happy?
- Does the person devalue your opinions, your feelings, and your accomplishments?
- Does the person yell, threaten, or withdraw into angry silence when you displease him or her?
- Do you "walk on eggs," rehearsing what you will say so as not to set the person off?
- Does the person bewilder you by switching from charm to rage without warning?
- Do you often feel confused, off balance, or inadequate?
- Is the person extremely jealous and possessive?
- Does the person blame you for everything that goes wrong?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, analyze the relationship carefully. If you answered yes to most of the questions, you are in an unhealthy relationship. People often harbor the misguided belief that the other will change, which usually doesn't happen.

Trying to love someone else before you have yourself in tune is as potentially disastrous as beginning a long journey in a poorly equipped, rundown automobile. Positive relationships demand average or better self-esteem and lack of dependency and addiction. Chad's description of a past relationship is an enlightening account of a person's reaction to obsessive love and can serve as a warning to its victims.

I ended a relationship because she was not independent at all. She could not make decisions without my advice. She would sit home waiting for me to call while I went out with my friends. She just put her friends out of the picture. Then when I called, she tried to make me feel guilty for having fun without her. She also called me at all hours of the night because she said she just wanted to hear my voice. I wanted to get some sleep! If she had not been so obsessive, things might have worked out.

He wrote about his needs in any future relationship: "She must be able to live for herself and not become a person who lives for me. I do not want a person who thinks the world revolves around me." Until obsession and addiction are no longer considered love, people will make tragic mistakes. The challenge is for both women and men to recognize the difference and to resist thoughts and behaviors that spawn these unhealthy relationships.

Love Schemas

What do you expect from a love relationship? A **love schema** is a mental model consisting of expectations and attitudes about love. Six love schemas have been identified by Hatfield and Rapson (1996). See if you can determine which ones represent obstacles to love.

1. *Secure*: is comfortable with both closeness and independence
2. *Clingy*: desires a high level of closeness and togetherness
3. *Skittish*: is uneasy with closeness; will often run away from intimacy
4. *Fickle*: is never satisfied with the present relationship for long
5. *Casual*: enjoys relationships but doesn't want to be committed
6. *Uninterested*: simply is not interested in any relationship

People formulate ideas about love that usually change over time. Jacob's schema fit the casual category. He enjoyed being with Emily, who, at 25 years of age, wanted to be in a committed relationship. They went their separate ways for 3 years, and then resumed dating. This time around Jacob wanted commitment, and within a few years, they were married.

Fear of Risks

Any relationship is risky. Love is even riskier. Deep self-disclosure leaves a person vulnerable. Some pain is inevitable, and accepting this reality is healthy. In positive relationships the benefits of loving and being loved will far outweigh the

pain. Without risk, individuals reduce their hurts, yet they also decrease the potential for happiness. I could decide to stay indoors for the rest of my life because there are risks of getting hurt outside. Would not you question this decision? Resisting a potentially happy relationship because of the possibility of hurt is equally debatable.

Risks of pain are less if you keep self-esteem independent of the relationship. "When our sense of worth whether we feel lovable or not depends on the response of some other person to us, we are off balance. We can do nothing but fall" (Kennedy, 1975, p. 94). With self-love, you can separate the end of a relationship from a rejection of self. The idea that you are unlovable because someone no longer wants to continue a love relationship with you is false.

Lack of Knowledge

The assumption that you don't need to know about love, that "it just happens" and then all is well, has pervaded people's thinking. "An individual can get a college degree today without ever having learned anything about how to communicate, how to resolve conflict, and what to do with anger and other negative feelings. Basic, to my mind, is the need for learning to be partners" (Rogers, 1972, p. 216).

Only in recent years have researchers studied love. Difficulty in defining the term was one of the obstacles. There are almost as many definitions of love as people willing to research it (Coleman and Ganong, 1985). When asked to define love, over 60 percent of nearly 400 college students described it strictly in emotional terms. It appears that education about love and intimacy is needed, and if emphasized (which could even mean required training), could provide the necessary understanding of and tools for building satisfying relationships. In the meantime, individuals can seek education on their own and then practice what they learn in developing loving relationships.

Recognizing Different Types of Love

Types of love can be distinguished. Keeping love as simple as possible, we will focus on two general types: passionate love and intimate love. Realize that other researchers and writers may use different words in describing types of love, such as immature and mature love, which are used by Gordon (1996).

Passionate Love

Sensations and unrealistic notions of love are at the heart of **passionate love**. Experts on passionate love describe it as a "hot," intense emotion, sometimes called a crush, infatuation, or being in love; it is an intense longing for union with another (Hatfield and Rapson, 1996). Young people become aware of this type and then define love in terms of sensations: "Love is the feeling of being swept off your feet." "Love is when your heart pounds hard and you just can not take your eyes off the person." "I love him or her so much I think my heart will burst." "I am so in love I could just die." Is this love? The individuals sound slightly paralyzed and almost unable to function (Gordon, 1996).

Do you remember the image of love in fairy tales? Love is an overpowering force between an attractive man and woman. He is bold, fearless, and capable of overcoming any obstacle to win her. She is frail and helpless and, of course, extremely beautiful. He rescues her, and together they go forth to live happily ever after. Most of us grow up believing in the magic of “chemistry” between lovers. Love feels exquisite and beyond our control (Cowan and Kinder, 1987).

Although the media do express more realistic versions of love relationships, myths and unrealistic pictures of love are still portrayed. Product advertisements even use images of love to entice consumers. Obsession and other aspects of passionate love are packaged as perfumes and sexy lingerie. Compared to obsession, all other love seems humdrum and mundane, whereas romanticized versions appear sultry, seductive, and the ultimate in emotionality and sensuality (Forward, 1991).

Descriptors of passionate love. If you were to write an all-consuming romantic novel, what images of love would you present? Hundreds of students have contributed their descriptors of passionate love, or what I call “fluff stuff.” Among the cleverest ones: “I thought it was going to be an everlasting tingle.” “It happens instantly in a flash like a Certs encounter.” “Love feels zingy, and you get dingy.” The responses are grouped into categories in Table 12-1.

One way to know that these notions are still popular is to pay attention to music lyrics. Songs from decades ago were full of messages such as “You belong to me” or “Our hearts are on fire.” Songs today still express an idealized, unrealistic version of love—for example, “I will do anything for you; I will even sell my soul for you,” and “I will die without your love.” One song even asked: “How do you know if he loves you so?” The answer? “It is in his kiss!” Amazing that you can tell if a man loves you by the way he kisses! And just listen to expressive individuals in the throes of infatuation: “It is a real high.” “I feel like I am on cloud nine.”

Dilemmas of passionate love. So what is the matter with passionate love? The body, in fact, is producing chemicals that contribute to the physical sensations. However, intense sensations aren’t enough. Sadly, a song from the past tells us, “Love and marriage go together like a horse and carriage,” and individuals with mistaken notions of love do get married in the heat of their passion. “Falling in love is like a space launch, full of flame and fire. Getting married in the fire and flame of the blast-off stage of the relationship is extremely dangerous” (Crowther, 1986, p. 123). Typical dilemmas of passionate love are loving the feeling of being in love more than you do the other person and allowing passions to become destructive.

Mostly love just makes people act silly, but sometimes the afflicted turn violent. Lovers have been known to kill those they love, particularly if the object of their affection is not similarly stricken. If it does not work, they either kill themselves or look for another victim (Chance, 1988, p. 22).

When people are in the throes of passionate love, they are convinced that the wild feelings will last forever. In actuality, they do not. Turbulent emotions become less intense (Hatfield and Rapson, 1996). Passionate love may feel wonderful for awhile, yet is not conducive to long-term happiness. Being responsible and

TABLE 12-1	Passionate Love Descriptors
<i>Survival</i>	
"I cannot live without you." "I am nothing without you." "I just cannot get enough of you." "If you ever leave me, I will die."	
<i>Physical Sensations</i>	
Walking on air or clouds Palpitating heart, shortness of breath Weak knees, dizziness Cannot eat, sleep, and think "I just melt when you look at me."	
<i>Perfection</i>	
"No one has ever loved like this before." "It is perfect. You're perfect." "Nothing will ever go wrong."	
<i>Exaggerated Promises</i>	
"Love conquers all." "All I need is you." "I would do anything for you." "We will always be happy (and will not have to even work on it)." "I will never look at another man (or woman)." 	
<i>Exclusivity and Possessiveness</i>	
"You are the only one for me." "You are mine." "You belong to me, and I belong to you." "I am jealous and you are jealous, and that means we are in love." "Just the two of us. Nothing else matters."	

in control of yourself are the hallmarks of well-being. In contrast, passionate love often means giving control to the other person. "Ernie always makes me feel terribly alone," wrote a 53-year-old student. "He wants to get married, so he causes me to feel so guilty when I say not now." Love that puts someone else in control has unhappy prospects. "Head over heels is an uncomfortable position for human beings" (Chance, 1988, p. 22).

Lovers become disillusioned when they finally realize that this type of love does not last. Those in the throes of passionate love also believe that the other is almost perfect (or at least should be). When reality sets in, these lovers are then disappointed.

This may sound depressing, yet it does not have to be. Most experts believe that the end of the "falling-in-love period" signals the start of a realistic stage when

true love can develop. “The most that romance can do is to draw two people together initially, but these feelings tend not to last, and they do not guarantee a satisfying long-term relationship” (Burns, 1985, p. 182). If the psychological attraction is not there or disappears, the physiological sensations vanish as well. The glue that keeps love intact has a cognitive base.

Do you remember when you bought a new car and the thrill and joy you experienced just looking at it? Later, you still enjoyed the car but in a different way. The newness wore off, so you did not feel the same “high.” The car was familiar, and you felt comfortable and secure with it. Your feelings, including pride, were deep and sure. This experience is similar to the evolution of long-term relationships. The glow is still there; however, it is a different, deeper glow.

Jealousy: A major challenge. Common to passionate love is **jealousy**, a feeling related to the threat of or actual experience of loss. Usually a blend of fear, anger, hurt, and sadness, jealousy is fueled by irrational thoughts, absolutist “musts,” and demands (Ellis, 1996). Hurtful behavior is a typical outcome. More than 33 percent of dating university students said that jealousy was a significant problem in their present relationship (Buss, 2000).

Possessiveness fans the flames of jealousy. “You are mine, and I am yours,” a part of passionate-love thinking, usually leads to: “Because you are mine, you will do what I want you to do.” This can mean not even looking at another attractive person. In extreme forms of possessiveness, a lover may insist that the other not pursue any outside interests. Violence and abuse are common outcomes of possessiveness.

Absolute control over another person is neither possible, desirable, nor loving. Instead it destroys what it sets out to protect. (Buscaglia, 1992, p. 142)

Does love mean ownership of your lover? Hopefully, you can answer that it does not. “A love that inhibits is not love. Love is only love when it liberates” (Buscaglia, 1992, p. 100). Are your expectations unrealistic? It is unrealistic to expect your partner to become blind to others and to react angrily if a “third party” admires your lover. What Buscaglia (1984) writes is healthy: “What a grand feeling to have a relationship with someone who is loved not only by you, but by many. That means you made a good choice” (p. 164).

In addition to damaging a relationship, jealousy has the potential to end it. Jocelyn was irrationally jealous of her fiancé, Troy. She could not bear his talking to other women, especially when they were apart. Because Troy’s job brought him into contact with both men and women, jealousy became a major problem. Jocelyn nagged and cried and became suspicious and clinging. Troy felt stifled, and the intensity of their conflicts became unbearable. Eventually, he broke their engagement. “All I did was love you so much!” cried Jocelyn, not acknowledging that she had done far more than that. “Love is not expressed by strangulation” (Branden and Branden, 1982, p. 127).

Recognizing the presence of jealousy helps to control it. Some people are chronically jealous. Low self-esteem is usually at fault. Individuals with higher self-esteem and an internal locus of control are generally less jealous and handle it more effectively. Equality is a powerful factor in the prevention of jealousy.

In any relationship, occasional twinges of jealousy can be experienced without damage. These usually occur when, for some reason, the relationship does not feel secure or, perhaps, you are suffering from a feeling of insecurity. What can you do? Recognizing the underlying thoughts is helpful because jealousy is related to cognitive appraisals and the meaning attached to an incident. For example, your partner is dancing with an attractive person. Instead of letting jealousy take over, examine your thoughts. If you are thinking, “She or he prefers that person to me” or “This is a threat to our relationship,” use rational emotive behavior therapy to change these irrational thoughts.

If jealousy is based on rational thoughts, it is not recommended that you suppress the feeling; however, avoid behaviors such as pouting, nagging, threatening, and clinging. Although most people do not like to feel jealous, denying it can cause damage. Much like stress, whether or not you acknowledge its presence, jealousy can wreak havoc on you and the relationship. Instead, using the dimensions of awareness described in Chapter 9 can help the other person understand your perspective. If the relationship is healthy, your partner will understand and help eliminate the reasons for the jealousy. Jealousy may lessen as two people become more mature in their relationship. Creating the kind of relationship in which jealousy will have a low survival rate is well worth the effort.

Everyone who cares and loves feels jealous at one time or another. The essential decision is whether you will allow your jealousy to become an all-consuming monster, capable of destroying you and those you love, or become a challenge for you to grow in self-respect and personal knowledge. (Buscaglia, 1984, p. 129)

Intimate Love

Unlike the “fluff stuff” of passionate love, **intimate love** is a deep, total experience composed of positive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Such love is the foundation of a long-term, mutually satisfying relationship. “Love is a process, not just a feeling, of discovery, of development, of growing together” (Solomon, 1988, p. 82). Saying “I love you” and experiencing the sensations are meaningless without actions. Love encompasses attitudes and behaviors such as responsibility, respect, knowledge, giving, and caring. “Love is an activity, not a passive affect; it is a standing in, not a falling for. Love is the active concern for the life and the growth of that which we love” (Fromm, 1956, pp. 22, 26). True love does not just happen; two people make it happen.

A song from years ago is “Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing.” Although love may not always be full of splendor, it is a “many-faceted thing,” meaning that there is a variety of components and factors that make up intimate love. Let’s examine what these are (TA Revisited).

Rubin’s components of love. Believing that social psychologists had neglected the study of love, Rubin (1970) developed a scale to measure liking and loving. The scale featured three components of love: attachment, caring, and intimacy (Rubin, 1973).

TA Revisited

The “child” ego state feels passion and love and encourages playful behaviors and spontaneous delight.

The “parent” ego state gives out both positive and negative messages about love and loving relationships.

The “adult” ego state encourages the positive feelings, rejects unwise “parent” messages, considers all factors related to a satisfying love relationship, and makes decisions.

Attachment has to do with the desire for the physical presence and emotional support of the other person as well as a preference for each other’s company. In contrast to the stifling togetherness of passionate love, healthy attachment means enjoyment and involvement in mutually rewarding activities. Enjoying being with each other bonds a couple. Connie, after her divorce, insightfully commented: “A clue I did not recognize was that Dan and I did not enjoy activities apart from others. We always double-dated, and after we were married, our social life included other couples. The two of us did not have fun just being together.”

In a marriage-preparation class, a lack of attachment was apparent. A young woman enrolled in the class alone even though she was engaged. Her fiancé bowled on the nights of class. After a discussion of Rubin’s components, she said, “I wonder about that. He is not here tonight because of bowling. Last night was Monday night football, on Wednesday nights he shoots pool, and Thursday and Saturday nights he goes out with his friends. We are together on Friday nights and usually on Sunday when he is not at a drag race. Well, that is one reason I want to get married. Either he will change, or at least I will have more leverage to nag him about it.” Not facing potential problems is another facet of passionate love.

The second component, **caring**, consists of feelings of concern and responsibility for another’s welfare. Tenderness includes awareness of the other’s needs and desires (May, 1969) and is related to caring, as is empathy. You will share stressors and experience anxiety and act in extra-thoughtful ways because you love. Often mistaken for caring is irrational possessiveness. Consider these examples:

Jenni was excited when her friend asked her to come to work in a new business.

She could finally pursue a career that she had given up four years ago. Eric, her husband, said, “You are not going to work. The kids and I need you at home.”

Raoul received word that his scholarship request had been approved. Although it would mean sacrificing, this was his chance to complete his degree. Amy, his fiancé protested, “I will not see you much if you have to study and work. And you will not earn as much, so we will not be able to get married as soon.”

How caring were Eric and Amy? For whom did they care? Genuine concern means that you consider another’s welfare. Blocking personal growth is uncaring behavior. Warm, caring behavior is unconditional positive regard, not the “I will love you if . . .” ingredient of passionate love.

Intimacy, the third component, is a desire for confidential, close communication. Rubin’s concept of intimacy reflects sharing and disclosing on all levels. A love

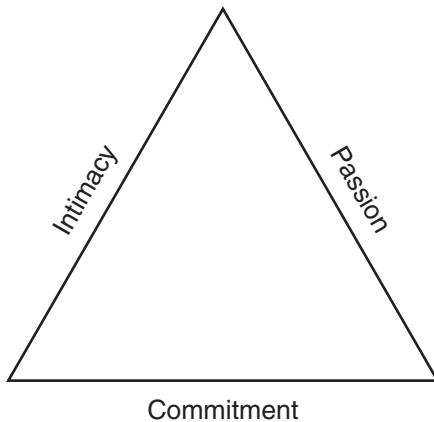


Figure 12-1

relationship resembles a deep friendship. The term *emotionally divorced* is often used to describe relationships that lack intimacy. Vulnerability is necessary for intimacy, and individuals often fear the risk. Teresa Adams (1987), therapist and author, says, "The crowd thins when it comes to intimacy." This component deserves extra attention and is discussed in a later section.

Sternberg's love triangle. Picture a triangle with three equal sides of balanced love. Based on his research, Sternberg (1987) identified ingredients of love: intimacy, passion, and commitment (Fig. 12-1).

Similar to Rubin's component with some additions is **intimacy** that includes closeness, sharing, communication, and support. Intimacy is akin to deep friendship. **Passion** is physiological arousal and an intense desire to be united with the loved one. According to Sternberg (1986), the needs for sex and affiliation give rise to passion. For most people, passion is what distinguishes liking from loving. The glue that holds a relationship together is **commitment** that is expressed in dedication to the relationship and faithfulness to each other.

A deeper aspect of Sternberg's theory is that one, two, or all three of the components can be present. A relationship that just has commitment, called empty love, is composed of two people who have been together for a long time with nothing special about the relationship except its longevity. Intimacy by itself is friendship, and passion is physical attraction.

Consummate love consists of all three components. Two people have a strong attraction and sexual desire for each other; they are close, communicative, and supportive; and because of a strong mutual commitment, the relationship is of high priority. Considering these ingredients, do you recognize any of your relationships? Researchers asked heterosexual couples how they experienced intimacy, passion, and commitment. They found overlap in how the three were demonstrated and concluded that even though these components are extremely relevant, love encompasses even more (Marston et al., 1998).

Ingredients of love. Using a model of a three-legged stool, Carlton Paine, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist, considers three ingredients to be necessary in a viable, ongoing, intimate relationship. In an interview, he stated that **trust**, which means honesty and dependability, is absolutely essential. He said, "A common way people undermine their relationship is by lying. Not knowing whether or what to believe or whether you can depend on the other is devastating." Having a fondness for each other is **affection**, the second ingredient. This can include passion and emotional comfortableness and draws a couple together. Completing the foundation is **respect**, an admiration and high regard for another. Paine recognizes that deeply satisfying relationships typically offer more; yet, as he works with couples, he believes that these are fundamental and must be reciprocal.

Examine any love relationship in terms of the various elements that have been identified. If some dimensions you want are missing, express this to your partner. The more open you can be about love, the greater the possibility of achieving a satisfying relationship. Even with all the components present, love can be strengthened by paying attention to other factors.

Relationship growth and fulfillment of needs. Healthy individuals grow in a positive direction. So do healthy relationships. Individual growth and relationship growth are associated. If individual growth is stunted, so is the relationship. In order for growth to be positive, individuals have to be free to achieve their potential. When individuals are committed to their own and to each other's positive growth, wonderful things can happen. Each person experiences satisfaction in life and the relationship is vitalized. Conversely, a person who is deprived of growth has little, or nothing, to offer the relationship except frustration.

Woe be it unto you if you give yourself totally to another. You are lost forever. Maintain yourself as the others maintain themselves. Then you put "They" together and form "Us." Then work on that "Us," and that "Us" gets bigger and bigger while the "You" and the "I" get bigger and bigger and form these enormous concentric circles that grow forever! And if, by chance, you lose that special "Us"—you still have an "I" and loving memories to build with. (Buscaglia, 1982, p. 162)

Intimate love maintains a balance between partners.

A possible area of concern is the course of individual growth. Individuals can grow, contribute to the relationship, and become closer to each other. Or they can grow apart. Couples who do not experience harmonious growth eventually find themselves worlds apart. Being mindful that change will occur and taking care to direct the course of growth are critical. Love flourishes in an environment of positive growth. When you choose to commit to a relationship, be sure your partner is one with whom you can *live* and *grow*.

Based on social exchange theory, which was covered in Chapter 10, love can be examined in terms of **fulfillment of needs**. A major function of any relationship is to satisfy individual needs. In fact, a predictor of happiness is the degree of difference between what you want and what you think you are getting from a relationship (Sternberg and Whitney, 1991). One relationship cannot fulfill all your needs. However, a love relationship, especially a long-term one, is primary and must satisfy a number of important ones. If you know yourself well, then you know what you need from a relationship (Fig. 12-2). A specific one identified by a single parent was the need to have a relationship in which the partner would also be a caring stepparent for her children.

After identifying your needs, you are ready for the next step. Deborah has needs for deep communication, demonstrated affection, and honesty. Can you see what would be likely to happen if Deborah feels a strong attraction for Kurt, who is honest, extremely quiet, and emotionally inexpressive? People who know him describe him as somewhat reclusive and cold. Strange as it may seem, people often fall in love with those who would have difficulty satisfying important needs. "Silent Sam or Sally" will not likely turn into a great communicator overnight. "Boring Bill or Billie" isn't apt to be much fun, and people who are "cold fish" will not find it easy to be affectionate. Some find out in time, as Andrea

What Are Your Needs from a Love Relationship?

- Companionship
- Stimulation and excitement
- Affirmation and caring
- Passion and sexual fulfillment
- Emotional support
- Self-awareness and discovery
- Communication and deep self-disclosure
- Demonstrated affection
- Equality
- Loyalty and fidelity
- Tenderness
- Fun and enjoyment
- Trust and honesty
- Commitment
- Intimacy

Figure 12-2

did: “He showed little caring and did not share with me. I did 95 percent of the caring. He was jealous and showed it in strange ways. I have learned in this class that I am glad I got out of it and that there is still hope for me.”

Fulfillment of needs requires that you match your needs with a partner who can satisfy them because it is that person who gives to the relationship what you need (see Fig. 12-3). Relationships have a better chance of remaining romantic if individuals are not frustrated by unfulfilled needs. The needs fulfillment activity at the end of this book can be used for mate selection, premarital assessment, and enrichment of relationships. The key is to communicate personal needs to each other, keeping in mind that the two lists probably will not be exactly the same.

When needs are not satisfied, what happens? Ideally, your dissatisfaction is communicated to your partner, and he or she is willing to change. Such was the case with Rosa and Bill. After 33 years of marriage, Rosa said that she would not remain in the marriage unless her needs for respect and intimacy were met. “Rocking the boat” as much as she did definitely made enough waves to open Bill’s eyes. He agreed to marital counseling, which guided them into a mutually satisfying relationship. Their story had a happy ending, but what if no changes are made? A sad possibility is that people will just “settle” and try to be content within relationships that are not nourishing. Unfortunately, this “settling” is quite common and is one cause of what are called empty-shell marriages. Far too

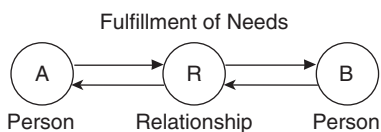


Figure 12-3

many have a dull-but-tolerable coexistence: a kind of death-in-life (Barbach and Geisinger, 1991). The value of a relationship lies in the joy it offers, not in its longevity (Branden and Branden, 1982). Another possibility is infidelity. Many affairs can be traced to an important need not being met in the marriage. A recent

challenge, according to marriage and family therapist Sue Frahm, is an online affair between two people who meet via the Internet. Unmet needs are probably partially responsible, and a person owes it to a partner to communicate what is lacking. Finally, when needs are not being met, another likelihood is to end the relationship. Most endings to relationships reflect unfulfilled needs.

How do you know that a person can or will satisfy you? Even though no guarantee is possible, you can significantly increase your chances by doing the following:

- Use the activity in Reflections and Applications to identify what you want and try to prioritize as much as possible. What is essential? Be sure that your needs are reasonable. What, if missing, would cause you to be unhappy and possibly end the relationship? Try to specifically describe abstract words such as “honesty.” For example, to just say that you want “trust” is not explaining it well. Two partners may have different meanings for the word, and if you are not sure what trust means, you will not know if it is present or not.
- Communicate your needs to your partner. Describe desired *behaviors*.
- Be willing to do what is necessary to satisfy the other person’s legitimate needs. This may mean behavior changes on your part.

Do not assume that the other will change after marriage or just because time passes. Behavioral change is possible but requires self-motivation. You can only suggest and encourage. The only one you can be assured of being able to change is yourself.

Two people may not have the same needs, and being compatible in this regard is preferable. For example, if Nicole wants a high degree of togetherness and Kelly prefers personal space, they will have difficulty satisfying each other. This is one reason that similarities are an important attraction factor. In most cases, your needs will not be 100 percent identical; however, equality is of concern. Exchange theory indicates that relationships are more satisfying and stable when outcomes for each partner are more or less equal and when benefits far outweigh costs.

If you find that your needs are unfulfilled and changes in a partner are not likely, you are hurting yourself, and probably the other person as well, by remaining in the relationship. Fortunately, unhappy situations can have happy endings.

A student wrote:

When I thought about needs fulfillment, I talked to my fianc[EACUTE] about our relationship. It was obvious that my needs were not being satisfied, and he really did not seem to care enough to change. I gave back the ring and went through a depressing period. Then I met Matt, and the two relationships are like night and day. We really clicked and are getting married next month. How sad it would have been if I had remained in that earlier relationship.

Behaviors of love. The actions of lovers deserve attention. “Joe loves me. I know because he beats up on anyone who looks at me.” Is this love or is it an uncontrollable temper fired by irrational possessiveness? “She loves me because she will do everything I want.” This sounds more like servitude than love. A much more affirming behavior is affection, which couples identified as the most important type of interaction in their relationships (Dainton, 1998).

Be aware of how you are treated by a lover. Is it affectionate and loving behavior? In any love relationship, individuals will occasionally demonstrate some less than loving actions. If hurtful behaviors are frequent or occur for poor reasons, and the aggressor feels no remorse and does not act to rectify the situation, you are not being loved. Ask yourself, “Do I feel loved?” If you can honestly answer in the affirmative most of the time, then the relationship is probably positive. “Do I feel affirmed?” is another essential question. Intimate love enhances self-esteem. Focusing on all behaviors is a good way to assess the quality of the relationship.

Love is complicated and mysterious, as anyone who has loved knows. Being able to differentiate between passionate and intimate love is a first step in understanding love relationships. Taking a close look at intimate love, its components, its potential for contributing to relationship growth and fulfillment of needs, and its behaviors reduces the possibility of mistakes and pain. After you have examined love, you may still wonder whether what you feel is love. Branden and Branden (1982) state: “We suspect that people who ask this question are not in love. In our observation and experience, love reaches a critical point where it tends to generate clarity of its own” (p. 24).

What Is Intimacy?

Intimacy is the pulse of the closest relationships. Intimacy is positively related to individual need fulfillment (Prager and Buhrmester, 1998). Definitions of intimacy, like those of abstract words, vary. To many, intimacy is equated with sexuality. When you consider that retail stores have “intimate departments,” which sell lingerie and negligees, it is little wonder that the mind focuses on bedroom scenes. The sexual relationship is only one facet of intimate love. “The most literal meaning of intimate is to really know another” (Rubin, 1973, p. 160). This is an important aspect within intimacy, yet more is involved. Intimacy frees and encourages you to be your own true self and to be accepted and loved because of who you are.

Intimacy has several key elements (Sternberg, 1987).

1. Promoting each other’s welfare
2. Experiencing happiness with each other
3. Holding each other in high regard
4. Being able to count on each other in times of need
5. Having mutual understanding
6. Sharing of self and possessions with each other
7. Receiving emotional support from the other
8. Giving emotional support to the other
9. Communicating intimately with each other
10. Valuing each other

Check your own love relationship to see how many of the 10 elements are present.

Development of Intimacy

Building intimacy requires dedication and effort. Individuals have to be willing to rid themselves of personal postures that prohibit intimacy (Malone and Malone, 1987). Check the list “Intimacy Blockers” If you see yourself, realize that you have work to do before intimacy is possible (Fig. 12-4).

Intimacy Blockers

- Withdrawal or isolating the self emotionally; possibly becoming overly involved with interests outside the relationship.
- Personal rigidity leading to an unwillingness to allow differences or to compromise.
- Overt self-righteousness and placing the need to be right higher than love.
- Lack of trustworthiness.

Figure 12-4

The last of the intimacy blockers is of utmost importance. Trust including predictability, dependability, faithfulness, loyalty, and honesty is essential. The essence of trust is emotional safety. "Trust enables you to put your deepest feelings and fears in the palm of your partner's hand, knowing they will be handled with care" (Avery, 1989, p. 27).

In addition to personal characteristics that prevent intimacy is fear. A study of gay men and lesbians revealed that fear of intimacy, as in heterosexuals, was related to feeling uncomfortable with emotional closeness, low levels of self-disclosure, and relationship dissatisfaction (Greenfield and Thelen, 1997). "We can only be intimate to the degree that we are willing to be open and vulnerable" (Ornish, 1998, p. 39).

An obvious deterrent to the development of intimacy is finding a partner to whom one is attracted and who encourages a long-term relationship. This seemed easier years ago when so much attention wasn't being paid to relationship building. "Dating is easy to do, but finding that special someone seems impossible," lamented a young adult. Where does one look? Two obvious locations are where one attends school and at a place of employment. Other possibilities and recommendations follow.

- Get involved with organizations, professional associations, and volunteer activities. If you have values and beliefs that attract you to certain causes, you will probably find people you can admire.
- Become more active. Join a health club and go to movies, plays, and museums. Spend time doing what you enjoy; you will then find others who like what you do.
- Let others know that you desire a serious relationship. Many people find a significant other through networking.
- A study of college students found that over 60 percent were successful in establishing an online friendship. Interestingly, friendship, not romance or sex, was the primary reason for seeking someone (Knox et al., 2001).

Regardless of how you proceed to meet someone, remain open to possibilities and definitely review the features of positive relationships in Chapter 10.

Intimacy can be difficult because of power struggles. Power can be distributed unequally with either the man or the woman having more control, or power can seesaw back and forth in a continuous struggle. The healthiest type of

structure is shared power based on perceived equality. Equal attention and seriousness are extended to the emotions, needs, desires, and roles of both. When equality goes out of a relationship, love follows (Solomon, 1988).

A serious obstacle is stereotypic masculine behavior that destroys potential intimacy. Furthermore, intimacy requires expression of emotions and self-disclosure on all levels. The classic male image denies these behaviors and sets up roadblocks to intimacy (Croese, 1997). The willingness to feel vulnerable—to open one's heart—which is difficult for a stereotypic man, is essential to intimacy (Ornish, 1998). Even though many men are changing as they learn the value of intimacy, those who continue in a stereotypic masculine role will face extreme hardships.

Intimacy for all couples is endangered by boredom and the tendency to take each other for granted. Intimacy demands quality interacting time. If, because of relationship longevity or familiarity or both, couples choose to engage in other activities or they simply ignore their relationship, intimacy can be lost for lack of interest. "To have a long-lasting relationship, we must avoid complacency. More love has been lost on the island of contentment than in any sea of torment" (Buscaglia, 1992, p. 166).

What helps the development of intimacy?

- Expression of genuine emotions, even unpleasant ones. During a seminar, Teresa Adams (1987) noted that "frozen anger blocks intimacy; thawed anger enhances intimacy."
- Empathic and nurturing behaviors
- Paying attention to each other
- Mutually enjoyable activities
- Communication, especially deep self-disclosure
- Commitment

Listed last, commitment is one of the most important aids to intimacy. Feelings of security and stability within a relationship create an oasis for vulnerability that, in turn, allows two people to know each other deeply. Although most research has been conducted on white heterosexual couples, commitment and intimacy are not limited by race or sexual orientation. In a study of African American lesbians and gay males, intimacy was a significant factor in relationship satisfaction. A majority of the men and women indicated that they loved their partners and had satisfying relationships. As a salute to commitment, they strongly believed that intimacy would continue (Peplau, Cochran, and Mays, 1997).

Building intimacy is one of the most difficult and challenging tasks within a relationship. The excellent chapter "Pathways to Love and Intimacy" in the book *Love and Survival* (Ornish, 1998) provides insight and guidance. The rewards are significant. If a relationship does not have intimacy, the partners may not realize what they are missing. If two human beings are truly intimate, their potential for joy is infinite.

Intimacy demands the highest risk but yields the richest reward. Intimacy is the driving force which makes the painful grit of life worthwhile. Intimacy is the life-giving beam of light, whereby we discover each other from the inside out, never quite fully, never entirely, but enough to find an exquisite inner oasis that replenishes us on our life's journey.

—Teresa Adams

Managing Conflict

In order to preserve intimacy, couples have to manage conflict successfully. A “just-kiss-and-make-up” philosophy may carry people through the courtship stage, and they probably will not realize the negative impact of their behavior until later. Years ago, conflict management was not a consideration. The widely held belief was that loving couples did not fight. A disagreement was a sign of weakness in the relationship, so you hurried to patch things up. Important conflict issues were often glossed over for fear that they would spell the end of the relationship. When couples did disagree, they usually did so in an unpleasant, aggressive manner. Then making up was a relief. The crux of the problem was often left untouched.

One of the first and best-known books on the subject of conflict management is *The Intimate Enemy: How to Fight Fair in Love and Marriage* (Bach and Wyden, 1968). The premise is that **verbal conflict**, defined as disagreement, between intimates is not only inevitable and acceptable but also can be constructive and desirable, and the authors provide insight into how to fight. You may inwardly shudder at the word *fight*. Thinking of **fighting** as a way of handling disagreement may make it more acceptable (Fig. 12-5).

Unfair Fighting Styles

Two opposite types of **fighting styles** are identified as unfair. Fight evaders—nonfighters—are “doves.” For any number of reasons, these people are fight-phobic and resist fighting. Gunnysacking, described in Chapter 10, is a common behavior. Two “doves” do not level with each other and often pay the price of emotional divorce. Most would not recognize this as a type of fighting; however, remember that fighting is defined as a way of handling conflict. The opposite are “hawks,” or aggressive fighters. They are usually loud, observably angry, and hostile. They use unfair, hurtful tactics and damage their relationship.

Both types experience anger, which is inevitable within an intimate relationship. Anger is a signal worth listening to. Anger is potentially constructive when a

The Experts and Conflict

Love rarely remains all flowers and sweetness. Disagreements, arguments, and fighting are natural when two people are trying to come together. More important than what you fight about is how you fight (Wegscheider-Cruse, 1988).

The health of a relationship is determined not so much on whether there are conflicts, but whether they are addressed and resolved. Conflict can serve useful purposes (Crowther, 1986).

A fair fight can clear the air and relieve stress. Do not be afraid to fight with ones you love. If you did not care about each other, you wouldn't bother to fight (Tubesing, 1981).

Figure 12-5



Figure 12-6 Fair fighting demands the finest communication skills.

person asks, “What am I angry about, what is the problem, and whose problem is it?” Learning how to fight fairly is essential because the “inability to manage personal conflicts is at the root of the crisis that threatens the structure of the American family” (Bach and Wyden, 1968, p. 31). A key point is that the way in which conflict is resolved determines the health of the relationship.

Fair Fighting

What is recommended in conflict resolution between intimates? **Fair fighting** is a process of resolving conflict without hurting each other or the relationship. What is involved? Most experts suggest that, if possible, couples should carefully

choose the best time, place, and conditions for resolving conflict. Too often, individuals fight when they are tired, under inordinate stress, or after drinking alcohol. These conditions set the stage for unfair fighting. When tired, couples can create added problems or, as often happens, one person “gives up” in order to get some rest. The concept of “giving up” and “giving in” places fighting on the level of a wrestling match. Usually, the one who concedes, or “gives in,” is left with resentment. Fair fighters can call a time-out, a halt in their discussion, and resume under more positive conditions. Here are a few other criteria by which to determine the extent of fairness (Fig. 12-6).

Winning–losing: If either person “wins,” the relationship loses. Getting rid of the win–loss notion is important. The key to win–win is to recognize and satisfy as best as possible each person’s highest priorities or most important needs. The health of a relationship takes priority over winning.

Involvement: Have you ever been engaged in a fight that was a monologue? Too often, one person does most, if not all, the talking, and the other simply absorbs or ignores. A behavior that is more often engaged in by men has been described in research as a danger sign (Gottman, 1994b). **Stonewalling** is removing oneself from an interaction and employing a stony silence that conveys disapproval, icy distance, and smugness. As frustrating as it can be, silence is equated with power. The amount of information exchanged is decreased with tactics such as the silent treatment and “I-do-not-want-to-discuss-it” approaches. In a fair fight the two individuals both take turns talking and listening.

Communication: The use of “I,” not “you,” statements; active, receptive listening; open, honest, and clear messages from both partners without game playing or manipulative techniques are essential.

Injury: Being careful to direct criticism to behaviors, to avoid personal attacks and name-calling, and to maintain consideration for the other is necessary. Unfair fighters attack the other in areas of vulnerability.

Directness: Remaining focused in the present and on the subject at hand is difficult to do yet necessary. If a new topic is presented, the issue can get sidetracked. Agreeing to handle the new topic later is recommended.

Specificity: Clarity and description of behaviors are needed. The use of perception checking and dimensions of awareness helps to clarify meanings. Be sure that you are not arguing simply because you don't understand each other.

Feelings: Frequently, when partners know each other's feelings, they experience empathy and understanding. Be willing to share all emotions.

Responsibility: Both people should take a share of the responsibility for the conflict itself and for the process required to resolve it. "It is your fault" "No, it is your fault," will get you nowhere. Conflict is a two-way street.

Humor: As strange as it may seem, if positive humor creeps into a fight, the mood will probably lighten. Obviously, any use of sarcasm or nasty humor would only hurt. Research supports the benefit of humor to soothe a partner (Gottman et al., 1998).

Another major contribution to conflict management was made by Aaron Beck (1988), a leader in the field of cognitive therapy, with his book *Love Is Never Enough*. Regularly scheduled discussions, what he calls "troubleshooting sessions," give individuals a chance to empty their "gunnysacks." This decreases reasons for nagging. Susan Borkein, a therapist, recommends a 20-minute period for cooling off and digesting the message after one person has expressed anger and displeasure. "Agreement is easier after feelings are vented and allowed to dissipate," she says. Whenever you are not able to manage anger, you are better off calling for a time-out and refusing to continue the fight. An excellent idea is to tape-record or videotape a fight so each person can see what he or she did to escalate the conflict and how to improve. Learn to assess an unfair fight by reading a description of one in Reflections and Applications.

In addition to paying attention to how partners fight, examine the effects or outcome. Has either partner's self-esteem been diminished? If so, the fight was not fair. Do you feel closer, as caring, more intimate? Has the relationship been strengthened or weakened? John Gottman (1994b), a well-known researcher in the field of conflict management, contributes an essential point: No matter how couples fight, they must have at least five times as many positive as negative moments together if their relationship is to be stable.

Fair fighting is not a sport like boxing. It is an art and a skill like dancing. It takes cooperation and style. In fact, the style of a fight is more important than what you actually fight about. Several days after a fight, you may remember only about 10 percent of the content, but you will probably have almost total recall for the style: whether the fight was fair, how hurt you felt, how strong the emotions were, how satisfied or upset you felt afterward. (McKay, Davis, and Fanning, 1983, p. 136)

Fair fighting leads partners along the path of increased closeness and intimacy. Conflict can be viewed as an opportunity to learn about yourself and your partner. "If you never disagree—never have a conflict of opinion—how can you ever really get to know one another?" was an insightful question by James Parkes, a man from Manchester, England. At that time, he and his wife, Betty, had been happily married for over 60 years!

Despite the best intentions, lovers do lose control at times and angrily erupt. The value of knowing how to manage conflict positively is that you know and

can admit when unfair tactics were used. Apologizing and committing to try harder the next time are signs of maturity. When people refuse to attempt positive change, it may be better to end the relationship. Openness and flexibility are key ingredients in positive conflict management.

Enriching a Relationship

Pretend you have planted a garden of vegetables and flowers. You pay little attention to the garden. You never fertilize, rarely water, and you do not weed. What will happen? The garden will have little chance of thriving, and even its survival is in jeopardy. Couples who do not take care of their relationship face the same risks. Compare your relationship to a highway that needs to be upgraded, maintained, and even rebuilt; the process is never finished (Sternberg and Whitney, 1991).

Why don't couples enrich their relationships? The primary reasons are simple unawareness and neglect. An assumption in the past was that if you didn't fight much and life was progressing smoothly, your relationship was in good shape. That is not necessarily true.

Relationships do not typically unravel because of major conflicts. Most relationships die slowly and without the conscious awareness of either party. There is a fine line between a relationship that moves in a positive direction and one that slips silently into apathy or the slow accumulation of disappointments and resentment. (Cowan and Kinder, 1987, p. 5)

Couples have a tendency to "settle into a life of routine" rather than engage in pleasurable activities such as dining out, attending a movie, dancing, and going on picnics. A couple will often "settle down" in front of the television or computer night after night. Even the sexual relationship can become predictable. "Sameness" becomes a barrier to enrichment (Fig. 12-7).



Figure 12-7

Why Criticize?

Another destructive habit is chronic criticism of your partner. Criticism invariably leads to contempt, and then the relationship is in jeopardy (Gottman, 1994b). Sadly, lovers often treat each other less kindly than they do their friends. Even in the most loving relationships, there is a minimum amount of criticism (Fig. 12-8).

Picture an intimate love relationship as a large rock. No matter how solid the rock (or the relationship), erosion can take place, and the mass is weakened by a wearing-away process. Resentment from a full "gunnysack" can erode the rock. Criticism, always "being right," and aggressive, hurtful actions chip away at even the most durable relationship.

Take a Criticism Quiz—True or False?

- Criticizing is a way of helping another improve, so by delivering critical comments, a person is showing love.
- Love can withstand the onslaught of negativism, so criticism will not hurt.
- Criticism is humorous.

All are inaccurate assumptions and false. How well did you do?

Remember that:

- Criticism, at least the way most people deliver it, is not a sign of love.
- Criticism does hurt, and it takes a toll on love.
- Criticism is not funny. Using sarcasm or ridicule to make a critical point is harmful.

Figure 12-8

If neglect has already led to apathy and boredom, or if chronic criticism and hurtfulness have taken their toll, a couple can revitalize the relationship. Couples benefit when they give enrichment a high priority and then commit themselves to achieving it. Improvements in the vital areas of communication and conflict management are enriching. Use any of the following suggestions on a regular basis.

- Set aside a special time to communicate each day if possible. Ideally, focus on positives and do not use it as a “dumping ground” for negatives. Be sure to self-disclose.
- Verbally and nonverbally express an interest in each other.
- Give positive strokes on a regular basis. Compliment each other.
- Demonstrate affection by physical contact, words, and deeds. Hug and kiss often, yet do not necessarily do it as a routine. Kissing each other good-bye is nice, but do not allow this to replace spontaneous moments.
- Be considerate. Say good-bye when you leave and hello when you come together again. Let each other know where you are and be dependable. Empathize with each other.
- Tell each other “thank you” each day, either for a particular behavior or just to express appreciation for each other and for the relationship.
- Surprise each other with little notes, cards, gifts, and unusual plans. Spontaneity brings delight into a relationship.
- Affirm each other privately and in front of others. Hearing your partner deliver praise about you in the presence of others is like a ray of sunshine on a cloudy day.
- Develop rituals and traditions. Celebrate special days and make everyday events more pleasurable. Provide “pleasers” for each other such as back rubs or a special home-cooked dish.
- Spend time together away from everyday hassles. In spite of best intentions, you may find it difficult to forget the nitty-gritty of daily life. Going away for a weekend or even overnight can be a refreshing and relaxing experience. Even going out for an evening gets you away from the demands of the immediate environment.

- Increase the number and frequency of pleasurable events. Find mutually enjoyable activities and engage in them on a regular basis.
- Express all genuine emotions—the pleasant and unpleasant ones. Sharing true feelings is an enriching experience.
- Laugh with each other at least once a day (more often is even better).
- Talk about your early relationship and what attracted you to each other in the first place. Share other positive memories. Couples who revel in their mutual past are likely to find pleasure in the present.
- Share your hopes and dreams. “Dreams elevate us beyond the mundane. To dream together adds an element of wonder to our relationship and gives us something to look forward to” (Buscaglia, 1984, p. 186).
- Share enrichment ideas with each other. Even if some do not seem feasible, the sharing is enriching.
- Give each other massages and use other types of loving nonsexual touch.

Enrichment revitalizes relationships. The song “Little Things Mean a Lot” delivers an important message.

You and your partner can help each other develop loving behaviors. If you want demonstrated affection, say so. Do not be like Ann, who said, “I know Dave loves me, but he just cannot show it.” Yes, he can! Learning new behaviors may be necessary. Knowing that hugging and other forms of touching are healthy for individuals and that they also benefit the relationship is motivating. A loving behavior may be to seek counseling. The process of enrichment may uncover areas where professional help could be beneficial.

Seeking Sexual Fulfillment

“Oh, great, this book has some dirty stuff in it” was the comment of a young student as he looked through a section on human sexuality in his psychology textbook. Accompanying the perception that sex is dirty are other attitudes that can interfere with sexual fulfillment. Many people seemingly have difficulty conversing about sex without resorting to phrases such as “doing it,” “humping,” “screwing,” “getting the groove on,” and “getting laid.” Discussions about sexuality are frequently filled with jokes (described as “dirty”), innuendos, and insinuating remarks. “There is something wrong with a country that says sex is dirty, save it for someone you love,” wrote sex educator and author Sol Gordon (Gibbs, 1993, p. 62). It is ironic that even though most people think that violence is bad and sex is good, parents often do not insist that a child turn off a violent television program. Yet, if that same child were watching sex on Saturday morning, most parents would label it gross or immoral and write a letter to the TV station in protest (Farrell, 1986). The fact that individuals do succeed in their sexual relationships amid such a negative environment is amazing.

Sexuality is a part of being human, and lovemaking has special meaning within an intimate love relationship. Finding ways to enhance one’s own sexuality and to maintain a fulfilling relationship is vital. Most of our sexual behaviors are learned, but this section will not offer a quick “how-to” course. Fortunately, in

Who's Sexually Active?

College students: 78 percent had experienced a casual sexual encounter.

High school students: 46.7 percent had engaged in sexual intercourse.

Before age 13: 7.4 percent had initiated sexual intercourse.

(Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2003)

Figure 12-9

today's society, anyone who wants to learn about the sexual act can do so. Excellent books on being sensual, handling sexual dysfunctions, and enriching a sexual relationship, as well as sex therapy, are available. Within this limited space, the importance of one's sex life will be emphasized, and general guidelines will be offered.

Sexual Behaviors

If you do not realize that sexual relations are occurring at an all-time high, you have not been paying attention. In today's world, the term *premarital sex* is not even accurate. Why? Individuals who engage in sexual activities may have no intention of marrying, and others who are divorced, widowed, or homosexual are certainly not engaging in *premarital sex*! A Gallup poll found that only 38 percent of U.S. adults think having sexual relations outside of marriage is wrong (Saad, 2001). This lack of disapproval undoubtedly makes nonmarital sex the norm. In a study of college students, 83 percent reported having had sexual intercourse (Kelley et al., 2001) (Fig. 12-9).

For most people, the best sexual experience occurs within a caring relationship. Sexual fulfillment is a major contributor or deterrent to satisfaction in both heterosexual and homosexual relationships. Marital satisfaction is correlated with sexual satisfaction (Wuh and Fox, 2001), and most of the participants in a study of gay men and lesbians reported satisfying sex lives with their current partner (Peplau, Cochran, and Mays, 1997). In addition to its benefits to the overall relationship, two other interesting findings have emerged. A study reported at the World Stroke Conference showed that men who have three or more orgasms a week are 50 percent less likely to die from coronary heart disease (McCarthy, 2001), and a neurophysiologist who studied 3,500 people for a decade said that regular lovemaking makes people look younger (*Ebony*, 2001). It appears that a healthy sex life benefits us physically and psychologically.

Sexual Enrichment

In order to enjoy the benefits of sexual relations, enrichment is especially helpful. Therapists are quick to point out that sexual dissatisfaction in long-term relationships is common, and usually the underlying cause is not a sexual one. Mark Schwartz, a sex therapist, contends that when clients come to him, he spends 80 percent of the time in relationship therapy and only 20 percent of the



Figure 12-10

time on sexual behaviors. In most cases, he says, each “I” must be fixed before any work can be done on the “we.” Incomplete self-disclosure is usually one of the factors; if so, deeper communication is warranted. Sexual problems often stem from other difficulties within a couple is relationship, which then result in sexual frustration. The key is to solve the underlying problems. Even without serious complications, most couples’ sexual relationships need attention and nourishment and can be improved. Even though you think you know all there is to know about sex, you can learn more!

Sexual myths. Getting rid of sexual myths is part of the education. Realizing that sex and love are not the same would prevent people, like Kate, from erroneously believing she was loved because “he could not keep his hands off me and wanted to have sex every time we were together.” Unfortunately, equating sexual desire with love often leads to being hurt. Young people engaging in sexual relations before they have developed a relationship easily mistake arousal for love. “We thought we were in love because we enjoyed sex. After that wore off, we could see it was not love,” admitted Kyle (Fig. 12-10).

Another myth is that passion and sex are most important at the beginning of a relationship. Actually, the longer that individuals are together, the more they are likely to benefit from the relationship. Unfortunately, when people do not understand this, they are apt to let the sexual relationship wane. If you are in a long-term relationship, monitoring affectionate behaviors can be a benefit. If you notice a significant decline from the past, decide to show more affection.

A third myth is that the sexual relationship will always stay the same. For example, the length of a marriage negatively affects the frequency of marital sex (Liu, 2000). That does not mean it becomes less enjoyable. A common myth is that as people age, their sexual interests and activities die. Is this true and inevitable? No, say the experts, unless you choose this course. Look at the following figures from a survey of Americans age 60 and older (National Council on the Aging, 2006). In fact, an active sex life appears to be as normal a part of aging as retiring and having grandchildren. According to the survey, almost half of Americans age 60 and older are still sexually active.

- 61 percent of men and 37 percent of women report being sexually active.
- 39 percent want sex more often.
- 61 percent of men and 62 percent of women find sex equal to or more physically satisfying than it was in their 40s.
- 76 percent of men and 69 percent of women find sex at least as emotionally satisfying as it was in their 40s.

- 72 percent of men and 47 percent of women consider sex important to their relationship with their partner.

An equal number claimed that they're satisfied with how often they have sex. Only 4 percent of all respondents said they wanted less sex. Men were more than twice as likely as women to report wanting sex more frequently. This was true in all age segments, even in men age 80 and older.

Biological changes occur with age and will alter some aspects of lovemaking. Most important are attitudes that can become self-fulfilling prophecies. "It is all over," they say, and it is. "It is not all over," they say, and it is not. Lovemaking can be better with age. Tenderness and love are powerful sexual motivators.

Satisfaction guidelines. In order to enjoy a satisfying sexual relationship, a cardinal rule is to communicate openly and honestly with each other. "We do not talk about it . . . we just do it," mumbled a husband in a counseling session. Even among university students, complete sexual self-disclosure was the exception, not the rule. The couples were more likely to disclose about sexuality when there was a high level of self-disclosure about other topics and when they perceived their partner to also be sexually self-disclosing (Byers and Demmons, 1999).

When you openly communicate, you learn about each other's likes, dislikes, needs, and wants. A word of caution is in order. Communicating does not mean just complaining about what you do not like. You want to be honest and suggest positive changes but put the emphasis on the positive and use communication as a means of enhancing your wants and desires.

A couple should consider sexual intercourse as just one important aspect of their total relationship and to enjoy more than the physical act. Also deeply involved are the mental and emotional parts of the selves. Lovemaking means literally that—interacting physically and emotionally with someone you care about. Is arousal, intercourse, and orgasm or ejaculations essential or are there other possible lovemaking options? (Williams, 1988, p. 19). The emphasis in lovemaking is often placed on the climax phase. Sex therapist Mark Schwartz caused laughter in his audience when he said, "Even foreplay is sometimes seen as unimportant. The word *foreplay* makes it sound as if all the good stuff is still to come." Lovemaking, in its entirety, is best seen as an ongoing interaction between two loving people.

A barrier to sexual fulfillment may be routine and boredom. It is important to add variety and zest to your sexual relationship. Although sameness in time and place may be determined by family situations, work schedules, and other factors, this does not have to deter the enjoyment of sex. Can you think of reasons for sexual boredom in a relationship?

What typically works best in long-term relationships is to first engage in sensual behaviors because passionate feelings almost always follow. In other words, let actions lead into the feelings. Other ideas are to stay in good health, care about your appearance and hygiene, learn how to discover each other's needs and wants, and dare to be spontaneous and creative! Introducing variety can help. There are lots of ways to add novelty to your sex life—a new location, technique, sexual position, or even some great lingerie could be just the spark a couple needs (Hutcherson, 2006).

The myth that love means a constant sexual “turn-on” damages relationships and it is unfair to think that an occasional lack of interest means lack of love. The belief that only men are interested in lovemaking and should make the first advance decreases spontaneity and freedom within sexual relationships.

Final guidelines deal with misinterpretations and manipulative uses of sexuality. “We will make love if . . .” or “I will not have sex with you if . . .” are manipulative techniques that reduce lovemaking to a game. If the relationship is troubled, you can rightfully refrain from lovemaking. Saying, “I do not want to make love because I do not feel loved (or loving)” is direct and honest. To use sex as leverage is to demean yourself and the relationship. Sexual fulfillment is a choice. To achieve satisfaction requires commitment, time, energy, and a great deal of communication. A goal of lovemaking is to relax and enjoy being in close contact with your lover.

Living Together

If you remember the phrase “shacking up,” you have firsthand knowledge of how attitudes have changed over time. When a couple was described as “shacking up,” it was not meant to be positive. Today this is called **cohabitation**, meaning two partners living together as if married, and it is no longer viewed in such a negative light.

Who Lives Together and Why?

Research about cohabitation focuses on heterosexual couples. However, gay and lesbian couples also live together in a loving relationship. In fact, the 2000 census counted 601,209 same-sex unmarried partner households in the United States, which is likely an undercount (Smith and Gates, 2001). Such relationships are typically enduring, meaningful, and rewarding. As Ruth describes her committed relationship: “Having spent the past 23 years with Shelly has made me really appreciate what a caring and loving relationship can mean” (Fig. 12-11).

For heterosexuals, living together outside of marriage has dramatically increased as a result of a more permissive societal attitude and liberalization of laws.

Communication Comparisons

Picture a group of recently married couples being videotaped as they discuss and try to resolve a problem. When given a problem to discuss and resolve, do you think there would be communication differences between those who cohabited and those who had not? Which couples do you think were better communicators?

More negative and fewer positive problem-solving and support behaviors were demonstrated by the cohabiters. Both partners tried to coerce and control each other. Wives who had cohabited tended to be more verbally aggressive. Researcher Catherine Cohan, Ph.D., strongly recommends communication-skills training for all couples.

Figure 12-11

In 2000, 3.8 million couples cohabited (Fields and Casper, 2000). Among young adults surveyed in a Gallup poll, 44 percent had at some time lived with an opposite-sex partner (Whitehead and Popenoe, 2001). Even though cohabitation in heterosexual relationships can serve as a replacement for marriage, usually couples cohabit as a testing ground or as preparation for marriage.

Whether cohabitation can enhance chances for marital success is questionable. Several studies paint a negative picture, including cohabiters having more conflict and less relationship satisfaction as well as a higher likelihood of divorce for those who do marry (Terry, 2000). Even though figures show that cohabitation has not improved the success of marriages, the reasons remain elusive. One suggestion is that those who cohabit may be less traditional and more independent in their thinking. Or could it have to do with communication, as discussed in Figure 12-11? What do you think the reasons might be?

Cohabitation may have a favorable aspect that seems to get overlooked and certainly is worthy of more research. About 40 percent of heterosexuals who cohabit do not marry each other (Terry, 2000). Most cohabitations last for about a year or a little longer and then either end in marriage or dissolve (Waite, 2000). It appears that living together does screen out potentially troubled marriages. This, undoubtedly, has lowered the divorce rate. Also beneficial is that living together has led to a postponement of marriage until later ages (Strong, DeVault, and Sayad, 1998). This delay can create better unions.

Few studies look at cohabitation prior to remarriages (Hanna and Knaub, 1981). Of 80 remarried couples in the Lincoln, Nebraska, sample, 40 had lived together for at least a month prior to their remarriages whereas 40 others had not (Hanna and Knaub, 1981). Unlike studies of cohabitation before first marriage, the cohabiting group scored higher on three measures of marital success, including family strength, marital satisfaction, and their own perception of adjustment.

Living Arrangements

If cohabitation has any benefits in terms of testing the strength of a relationship, the attitudes and conditions must be realistic. In addition, giving deliberate thought and action to living together increases the enjoyment of the experience and the likelihood for long-term satisfaction.

Because roles are flexible and responsibilities are shared, the question arises of who does what. A simple answer is: either or both. The couple may use communication and negotiation in the designation of tasks. A number of criteria can be used. For example, who cooks? The two can share responsibilities, either taking turns or working together in the kitchen. Or couples can consider preference, ability, and convenience.

Maintaining a truly shared arrangement can be challenging. An unequal division of labor was evident in a study of unmarried opposite-sex roommates and cohabiters. Even though there was no difference in time availability and contributed resources, women spent more time and effort on the majority of tasks (Mikula, Freudenthaler, and Brennacher-Kroell, 1997). Among same-sex partners, the most common division of labor involves flexibility; tasks are either shared or divided according to personal preference (Peplau and Spalding, 2000). In lesbian relationships, when one is the primary breadwinner and the other the

REFLECT AND APPLY**Reflect**

- ◆ *For each of the obstacles to love, write one problem that would likely occur. In other words, give an example of how each one is an obstacle.*
- ◆ *Of the various components of love, which are especially important to you?*
- ◆ *After reading the Teresa Adams quote at the end of the section on intimacy, think of a relationship that the quote brings to mind. Hopefully, it is your own or the relationship of someone who is close to you.*
- ◆ *Think of a recent disagreement you have had with another person. How was it resolved? Did you fight unfairly or fairly? If unfairly, what can you do better next time?*

Apply

- ◆ *Listen to a current song about love. Are the lyrics indicative of passionate love, intimate love, or both?*
- ◆ *Look for examples of both traditional and egalitarian behaviors in your own and others' relationships.*
- ◆ *If you are in a love relationship, use one of the enrichment ideas. If you are not, ask someone what he or she does in terms of enrichment.*

homemaker, inequities are more common. The researcher noted that the one in the stereotypic woman's role is often negatively affected by economic dependency (Sullivan, 1996). Negotiating roles and responsibilities and then ensuring that you do your fair share can strengthen a living together relationship. Egalitarian men who reject stereotypic gender roles are more likely to intend to have a child and less likely to divorce than traditional men (Kaufman, 2000) (Reflect and Apply).

What else makes a difference in nourishing a living-together relationship? In a study comparing opposite-sex and same-sex couples, intimacy, autonomy, equality, and constructive problem solving contributed to relationship satisfaction for both groups (Kurdek, 1998). For all couples, remembering why you are living together and treating your day-to-day relationship as a precious gift as well as an opportunity for happiness and satisfaction are sound guidelines.

Choosing to Marry

Should everyone marry? Despite a consensus of opinion that marriage is not for everyone, most heterosexual individuals assume that they will marry, and marriage rates remain high. Nearly 9 out of 10 Americans will marry at least once (Belsie, 2002).

Ideally, marriage is truly a choice. Unfortunately, a feeling persists that unless one marries, life will be meaningless. Since the option of remaining single is more appealing than it once was, getting rid of this notion is beneficial in choosing a happy life, married or not. With no pressure driving individuals to marry,

they can be either satisfied with single life or free to decide to marry for positive reasons. If the choice is to marry, thoughtful preparation and knowledge can set the stage for a successful union.

Definitions and Images of Marriage

Too often, couples embark on a marital journey with little or no information except what their own images supply. Looking at a committed relationship through a realistic lens can prove to be extremely beneficial.

What is marriage? Agreement on a general definition, as well as on expectations, is a first step in understanding. In its simplest sense, marriage is a legal institution. Sociologically, **marriage** is a socially approved and legally sanctioned mating arrangement, usually involving sexual activity and economic cooperation. In the United States, marriage is based on **monogamy**, having one mate at a time. For many, marriage is also a commitment based on religious beliefs, personal values, or both.

Currently, marriage is considered a heterosexual institution, and gays and lesbians have been deprived in most states of its legal and monetary benefits. In recent years attempts have been made to allow civil unions for same-sex couples. Currently in the United States, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts recognizes same-sex marriage, whereas California, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Maine, New Jersey, and Vermont grant persons in same-sex unions a similar legal status to those in a civil marriage by domestic partnership, civil union, or reciprocal beneficiary laws (Wikipedia, 2006).

Commitment, obviously a necessary component of marriages and civil unions, is a declaration of loyalty, loving conduct, and honor and includes mutuality of purpose, a willingness to put forth effort, and a pledge of fidelity. Two people who share this idea of commitment are likely to exert effort and succeed in their relationships. Additionally, being in a state of interdependence in which the partners lose neither their identities nor their sense of autonomy is desirable (Lauer and Lauer, 1985).

Images of marriage have undergone changes. In a 2001 Gallup poll, 94 percent of never-married singles agreed that, first and foremost, one's spouse should be a soul mate, a special "someone" who is both lover and friend. In decline were religious, economic, and parental reasons for marriage. The survey indicates that individuals are expecting even more from marriage, yet, overwhelmingly, 86 percent said that marriage is hard work and a full-time job (Whitehead and Popenoe, 2001).

Types of Marriage

Marriages vary in a number of ways, and it is important to know what type satisfies you and your partner. In the past, rules for who did what within a marriage were predetermined and inflexible; this marriage is the **traditional** form. Based on a patriarchal framework, the wife defers to her husband. She makes decisions about home management and the children while he retains final control over family decisions because he is the dominant partner. This "father knows best" type of arrangement was more common and suited to the society of yesteryear (Fig. 12-12). Is this type of marriage arrangement common today?

Are You Willing to Take a Risk?

In the event of divorce:

Rita and Jim were in a traditional marriage for 13 years. He said, "I want you at home taking care of my two boys and not working." She was agreeable, and his business brought them a more than adequate income. Suddenly, Jim left, deserting the family. He left neither a forwarding address nor any money. Rita, who had never worked before, was able to earn only minimum wage. She had to move from her townhouse because she couldn't make the payments. "I never dreamed that this would happen to me," she said.

In the event of a spouse's death:

Colleen, a 56-year-old, was left with no means of supporting herself after her husband's death. To add to her serious misfortune, 6 months before his death, his job had been eliminated and, along with it, the medical benefits and company-paid life insurance. They were uninsured.

Within a marriage:

Dan and Joan were in their late forties, their children were raised, and they were living in a nice condominium when Dan made a job change. Joan had not pursued a full-time career. Soon after the job change, Dan was terminated because of a company downsizing. He sought a professional job with no luck. Without income, they moved in with one of their children for a time. When Dan started work as a security truck driver and Joan took a job at the local hospital, they found a small apartment, similar to one they lived in when they were first married.

Figure 12-12

Another type, the complete opposite of the traditional marriage, is the **egalitarian** or **shared arrangement**. A shared marriage is fair and sensible and fits our current economy and society. Most families today need or want two incomes. Studies on marital success reveal benefits to this arrangement. Marital satisfaction is related to a perception of equity and satisfaction with division of labor (Huppe and Cyr, 1997). Practical benefits have to do with acquiring a variety of skills and being capable of supporting yourself.

With all its advantages, actually practicing a shared marriage is challenging because of past patterns of thinking and behaving. As is true of most categorization methods, the lines can be fuzzy. Couples today may describe themselves as being in an egalitarian marriage and still engage in behaviors based only on their sex. For example, most women correspond with relatives and send greeting cards. Why? The honest answer is just because they are women. Many husbands drive the automobile, and the wives ride. Why? Again, most often, just because they are men. And couples can forget their commitment to a shared relationship on special occasions. At a holiday dinner in most homes, do you see equal distribution of labor? If it exists, the couple is achieving egalitarianism against the odds.

What is today's reality? Even though many couples say they prefer a shared marriage and the majority of women work outside the home, research shows that division of labor is not shared equally in most households. Generally, women continue to carry primary responsibility for household tasks, child care, and care of

the elderly even when they work outside the home (Knudsen-Martin and Mahoney, 1998). Taking into account all tasks related to the household, time-diary data from couples showed the following (Bianchi et al., 2000):

- Women have cut their housework hours in half since the 1960s.
- Men are doing more housework than they did in the 1960s.
- Wives perform twice as much household labor than husbands, especially in the areas of cleaning and laundry.

Times are changing, yet roles and responsibilities seem quite resistant to modification.

What makes a difference in division of household labor? Time availability, relative resources of the spouses, and gender-role beliefs are factors accounting for the gap between husbands and wives (Bianchi et al., 2000). Racial diversity corresponds with differences in the participation of males. In off-reservation Navajo Indian families, fathers spent about 75 percent as much time as mothers in household tasks, which is more time than for other cultural groups (Hossain, 2001). Similarly, African American husbands spend more time in household labor than other races (Kamo and Cohen, 1998). Reaching agreement about household tasks before making a commitment and then insisting on adherence to the decision are strong recommendations. A study revealed potential problems. Of the 93 percent of teenagers who said they expected to work as adults, 60 percent of boys and 50 percent of the girls said their spouse would likely stay home to raise the children (Jackson, 1998). So what will the future hold? Obviously, communication about such a vital part of marriage is in order. Problems are inevitable when people marry without forethought or discussion about marriage type.

Another way of defining a marriage is to look at its quality as rated by perceived satisfaction. Several dimensions are possible. Let's look at two basic groups identified in *Coupleship* (Wegscheider-Cruse, 1988).

- The spirited or centered couple expresses their satisfaction. Each feels happy and fulfilled. The relationship not only works—it thrives.
- The spiritually dead or estranged couple expresses dissatisfaction. The partners feel lonely, hurt, and angry. Their relationship is unfulfilled.

Preparation for Marriage

The time to ask serious questions about marriage is before the wedding ceremony. Some of these questions could be:

- Does my partner have habits that I dislike?
- Do we have similar styles of spending and saving?
- Am I satisfied with how we share household responsibilities?
- Do we have similar parenting styles?
- Are our religious beliefs the same?

For a more complete list of possible questions go to <http://www.prepare-enrich.com> (Olson, 1998).

TA Revisited

“Parent” messages range from “Do not get married. You are not ready” to “You better get married soon, or you may never have another chance.”

The “child” ego state experiences love and desires marriage because of perceived future happiness and the prospect of pleasure.

The “adult” ego state is needed to process, prepare, and make a conscious choice based on reason.

The potential for success is increased when careful examination is followed by thoughtful decisions. A lack of any formal preparation is the norm even though research reveals that couples can benefit a great deal from a premarital education program (Stanley et al., 2001). Some religious groups may either require or offer premarital counseling. The value of the counseling lies in the skill of the clergy member to utilize sound, practical advice based on research. Premarital counseling by therapists is available yet not commonly sought. Some high schools offer coursework regarding relationships, and almost every college and university have a course in marriage and family.

Unless all students are required to learn how to succeed in long-term relationships, large numbers will remain uneducated. A marriage license is no certainty that individuals know anything about relating. The emotional and financial damage to adults and children as a result of unhappy marriages is apparent (TA Revisited).

How to prepare. Preparation for marriage begins within the self. Chronological age is definitely a factor. Adolescent marriages are especially likely to end in divorce (Strong, DeVault, and Sayad, 1998). The older a woman’s age, the longer the marriage is likely to last (National Center for Health Statistics, 2001). The median age for women is about 25.1 years and for men 26.8 years. A young adult is more likely than a teenager to have achieved independence, identity, maturity, and experience. When individuals marry without having had other close relationships, they may wonder what they have missed and are likely to feel restless and dissatisfied.

Do you recall Erikson’s psychosocial stages? Regardless of age, establishing identity is needed before intimacy is likely to be successful. People who are divorced or widowed are wise to think about this because identity is easily “lost” after a major life change. Related to identity is independence. Are you able to live on your own? Any healthy relationship is only as strong as its two individual parts. Partners must have a strong sense of “I” to form a successful “we.” The symbolism about “two becoming one” may seem romantic; however, a strong “I” and another strong “I” are more likely than an enamored “we” to sustain the stressors of a long-term relationship.

Love thrives when two people are quite capable of living without each other but choose to live with each other. (Peck, 1978)

Clearing away personal litter from past relationships and experiences is important. Bonnie, a friend since grade school, became a clinical psychologist.

Reflecting on being raped when she was 16 years old, she said, “Nobody thought of a need for counseling. I was, I guess, just expected to recover over time. I realize now that unresolved issues related to the rape contributed to unhappiness in marriage and then to my subsequent divorce.”

Other personal factors related to success are self-esteem and self-created happiness. Desirable behavioral characteristics such as temper control, assertiveness, and open communication lead to better long-term relationships. In a study designed to predict marital success, one factor that emerged was the husband’s willingness to accept influence from his wife. For both partners, contempt, belligerence, and defensiveness were destructive patterns (Gottman et al., 1998). Obviously, a well-adjusted person has a much better chance of having a successful marriage than one who is struggling with personal issues. “You want a partner, not a private nurse, caretaker, or entertainer.” Finally, maturity and an understanding of commitment are essential. Each person’s “self” determines the success of a marriage. “Your relationships travel the same course that you travel” (Dyer, 1992, p. 114).

Look for a partner who is also happy, so that you are not burdened with the impossible responsibility of trying to fix someone else. (Goulding and Goulding, 1989)

After personal readiness has been achieved, education about long-term relationships is recommended. College courses, personality exploration, marriage-readiness tests, reading, and openly discussing issues with a prospective partner are beneficial. A practical, easy-to-understand book highly recommended for all couples is *Why Love Is Not Enough* (Gordon, 1996). Cohabitation, as discussed earlier, can prepare mature couples for marriage if they live together in a realistic way.

Succeeding in Marriage and Other Committed Relationships

A thorough discussion of identified success factors can increase the probability of happiness and success in marriage and other long-term relationships. A couple is also advised to consider the opinions of others. Remember the romantic tale of Romeo and Juliet? That story leads us to believe that their families were wrong for objecting. Do not be blinded by this belief. If your family and friends do not think you are making a good choice, at least consider their reasons. Then draw upon research and credible information in making a decision.

Success Factors: Questions to Ask

Whether in a preparation program, counseling setting, or by themselves, couples can answer questions and evaluate potential success. If married or already in a committed relationship, many of the questions can be used to assess areas of strength and weakness. Following each question are reasons for their importance as well as recommendations.

- *Have we known each other well for a long enough period?*

Length of acquaintance. Knowing each other well for at least a year is recommended. This does not guarantee readiness; however, giving yourself that

amount of time so that you experience the four seasons and all the holidays is revealing. One student remarked, "You need at least a year just to discuss all of these questions!"

- *Why do we want to make a long-term commitment?*

Reasons for marriage or commitment. Counselors believe that the answer to "Why do we want to enter into a committed relationship?" is one of the best predictors of success. Think of all the possible reasons for marriage. Among them are a number of poor reasons. Pressure is one. This can come from a lover, family, friends, or society itself. Even age exerts pressure. "I am almost 27 years old, and I feel like I should be thinking about marriage," said a man. If you feel any kind of pressure, force yourself to resist. Janeen, a student, wrote about her experience:

We did not look at the "marriage" but listened to the pressure of being married. He was a closed person and a loner. They say opposites attract, but we were too opposite. I also was thinking I had to have someone and was not looking at that "someone."

Other reasons come from the child ego state: "Oh, marriage seems like such fun." "It will be like playing house." "The wedding and honeymoon will be so much fun." "I am so in love." Even love is not a sufficient reason to marry because satisfying long-term relationships require even more. A need to have someone to feel fulfilled comes from our "child" and is a deficiency-based reason for marrying.

Looking at the advantages and disadvantages of marriage can help you identify the reasons and evaluate costs versus benefits. Some advantages are companionship, caring, sex, learning from and helping each other, financial sharing, legal benefits, and raising a family. Several of these advantages are possible without getting married; however, in this society, marriage is the recognized and legal way of achieving them. Other advantages are related to psychological and physical health. In an international study, marriage increased degree of happiness in 16 of the 17 nations sampled, with the exception being Northern Ireland (Stack and Eshleman, 1998). Compared to unmarried people, those who are married tend to have lower mortality, less risky behaviors, more monitoring of health, higher sexual frequency, more sexual satisfaction, more financial savings, and higher wages (Bramlett and Mosher, 2001). The percentage of persons surviving at least five years after diagnosis of cancer was found to be greater for married than unmarried persons (Ornish, 1998). Love and intimacy, especially in a socially approved context, apparently contribute to our well-being. Disadvantages include relinquishing personal freedom to a certain extent, added stressors, having to share resources, and the risk of an unhappy relationship as well as possible divorce.

Eliminating all the poor reasons still leaves a question. What is a positive reason for marrying? A couple whose marriage has great potential for success might say, "We are marrying because we are sure that we share an intimate love, we have carefully prepared and considered all known factors, we believe we have an excellent chance of succeeding in marriage, and we want to make a legal and deep commitment to this relationship."

- *What do we expect?*

Expectations about marriage. This question can yield some intriguing answers. Incompatible or unreasonable expectations by one or both partners should be a warning signal. “I expect you to be there for me always. I expect you to satisfy all my needs. I do not expect that we will fight.” Even if the two agree on these expectations, they are being extremely unrealistic. A large gap between what people expect and what actually occurs leads to disappointment and frustration.

Myths about marriage abound. “We will live happily ever after without having to work on the relationship,” “Neither we nor our relationship will ever change,” “Fighting is bad for a relationship,” “What goes on outside of our marriage will not affect us,” and “People stay in love forever.” Too often, individuals will look at marriage as either “a bed of roses” or “a bed of thorns,” and neither extreme is accurate. A couple would benefit from dispelling the myths.

An underlying expectation, usually quite subtle, is that marriage will be fantastic for a brief period and then downhill after that. “The honeymoon is over” is a phrase used to describe a marital relationship after the initial stage. Have you heard people describe marriage in the following ways?

“They have settled down.” (Does not this sound inviting?)

“They are an old married couple now.” (Probably because they have actually “settled down.”)

“You can tell they are married.” (This describes a couple that appears bored or uninterested in each other)

“They must not be married.” (This describes a couple that is holding hands or showing affection.)

“They tied the knot.” (Ouch!)

When discussing his upcoming marriage to a young woman, he replied, “Yeah, I am going to bite the dust this weekend.” He evidently did just that and in less than a year was divorced. The “ball and chain” stereotype is apt to lead to unhappy outcomes. Also, if you begin to take each other for granted, either or both partners suffer. Then negative images can become the reality. Checking expectations is essential. If yours are unrealistic, dismal, or incompatible with your partner’s, either change your thoughts or postpone marriage.

- *What type of marriage do we want and how will we achieve it?*

Possible types of marriage. As discussed earlier, types of living-together arrangements are related to roles, responsibilities, and quality in a marriage. A study of Chinese young adults provides a reason for an honest discussion. Females were far more likely than males to believe that household chores and tasks should be equally shared and that women were entitled to careers (Xie and Lin, 1997). When one partner desires an egalitarian marriage and the other favors traditionalism, opportunities for conflict are greatly increased. Differing gender role beliefs and differing perceptions of role equity significantly affect marital stability (Guilbert, Vacc, and Pasley, 2000). Not only do most women want men who will share in household responsibilities (Kaufman, 2000), but also satisfaction

with division of labor was a significant predictor of marital satisfaction for both sexes (Stevens, Kiger, and Riley, 2001). Periodically, checking with each other concerning perceptions of fairness will help prevent resentment and contribute to a more satisfying union.

- *Are we both going to pursue careers and, if so, how will we handle such aspects as work schedules, relocation, and conflict between career and relationship?*

Careers and jobs. If you opt for a shared marriage, you will probably both be contributing income. Men and women work not only for incomes, but also often they prefer having careers and enjoy their work. However, even though employment has benefits, dual-career couples can find that issues of relocation and career advancement cause conflict. If couples believe in equality and comparable levels of power, decisions will be made jointly by weighing costs versus benefits. The best interests of both will be considered, and either may be expected to make a change.

- *What are our career and personal goals and are they compatible?*

Goals. If compatible, all goals can have positive effects on a relationship. Two people moving in similar directions can share excitement and challenges. Discussing career goals and personal ones such as homeownership, further education, and travel is important, and doing so with a flexible attitude is essential. Total honesty is imperative. Cynthia sadly mentioned how Rob, before marriage, had talked about his desire to travel. "Since we have been married, all he wants to do is stay home." A positive note about goals is that the more education people have the more likely they are to stay married (Armas, 2002).

- *Have we explored our financial situation? Do we know each other's present income and potential debts and past financial history? Will we budget? How will we manage our finances? What are our feelings and attitudes about money?*

Financial issues. Financial incompatibility and struggles can bring even the strongest relationship to its knees. Even with a more than adequate income, couples can face problems if they disagree on how money is to be used and have different attitudes about money. Karen was a saver and would spend money only for essentials. Luxuries were not important. "The money is better in the bank" was her philosophy. Lee believed in using money and living for today without much thought of tomorrow. "You cannot take it to your grave" was his motto. They argued regularly and bitterly about money. The handling of finances covers many areas. Will you keep your incomes separate? Will one or both of you pay the bills? How will you make financial decisions? These are practical and necessary issues to resolve.

Another valuable exercise is to assess financial independence so that one is not overly dependent on the other. Ask yourselves the following questions (Farrell, 1986).

- Are we committed to sharing all expenses equally? If not, for what reason? (Hopefully, this does not indicate a future of financial dependency.)
- Am I able to support myself in the style I prefer?
- If my partner works less than I do, am I comfortable with that?
- If I work less than my partner, am I comfortable with that?

An excellent resource is *Smart Couples Finish Rich* (Bach, 2001), a book designed to create a financially secure future. A frank discussion of finances reveals a great deal about both people and the quality of the relationship. Part of this discussion should be about any assets or debts that you have that will be brought into the marriage. At times a prenuptial agreement may be necessary to clarify financial rights and responsibilities during marriage. Or couples may want to avoid potential arguments if they ever divorce by specifying in advance how their property will be divided (Nolo, 2006).

- *How similar are our values and religious beliefs? How similar are we in important aspects of life? How will we handle conflicts in these areas?*

Similarities. Differences are interesting and can be positive; however, relationships are strengthened when partners share similar values and attitudes, have some of the same interests, and share a common lifestyle. Couples who have compatible religious and philosophical beliefs find it easier to be intimate. Strong values and attitudes, if unshared, are especially troublesome. For example, if you are opposed to prejudice and committed to human rights and equality, a partner's bigotry would pose a serious threat to a relationship. Minor differences, which lend spark and variety to a relationship, are acceptable. Major differences, especially in sensitive areas, are disruptive.

Homogamy is the tendency to enter into a relationship with someone who is similar to you. Differences in socioeconomic backgrounds and age are good to examine. Do you feel comfortable in each other's worlds? Do you view the differences as positive or potentially negative? A question for many in today's society has to do with interracial and interethnic marriages. In recent years there has been a substantial increase in rates of interracial marriage especially between black men and non-black women (Crowder and Tolnay, 2000). Asian women have the greatest tendency to marry outside their race. In 2000, nearly 32 percent did so (Gardyn and Lach, 2000). Interracial couples are together for love, affection, and shared values, which are no different from same-race couples (Moore, 1999). Understanding the special challenges interracial couples in a world that is still prejudiced and discriminatory is critical. Having several other similarities and a strong intimate love will be instrumental. Realistically, interracial couples will be contending with additional obstacles because of their racial differences. That does not preclude them from being successful and, if so, deservedly, with a deep sense of pride.

- *Do we have common interests? How do we like to spend vacations? How will we use leisure time? How important are our hobbies?*

Interests and leisure time. People want enjoyment within an intimate relationship. Even though it is not necessary to have exactly the same interests and

hobbies, sharing several and being open to others lead to mutual pleasure. If both generally agree about vacations and holidays and are open-minded when these are being discussed, the relationship benefits.

- *Are our lifestyles compatible? Do we have some of the same friends? Do we like each other's friends?*

Lifestyles and friends. “Amber really likes to party, and when we first started going out, I found her wild ways attractive. As time went by, I realized that I did not like the drinking scene, the late hours, and all the running around. We fight about this a lot,” said Chris. Compatibility of life styles impacts on long-term happiness, and if neither is willing to change, marriage is not the answer. Lifestyle is also reflected in how you demonstrate your socioeconomic status (i.e., large, showy home versus small, average-looking residence) and time allocation (i.e., work before play or fun comes first).

Even though you do not necessarily have to like all the friends of your partner, not liking *any* or *few* is a red flag. It is important to explore reasons for liking and disliking; in the process, you will learn more about the other person. Although maintaining friendships throughout life is important, putting friends ahead of a significant other is asking for trouble.

- *Are we independent of our families? What role will our families play in our lives?*

Extended family issues. Overly strong ties to one's biological family can cause conflict. “He spends more time with his parents than he does with me,” complained a young woman. “It seems like they always want him to help them, and he just picks up and goes.” Families will remain important, and successful couples usually have positive relationships with extended family members, yet these relationships should be secondary to the marriage.

What about not liking or not getting along with each other's families? Again, caution is in order. For what reasons do not you like or get along with your partner's family? Are your feelings similar to your partner's? “I do not really get along with two of my brothers, so I do not expect her to like them,” said one man. It is true that you are not marrying a family; however, keep in mind that this person spent many years with family members and has certainly been influenced. Special concerns are families with poor communication, inflexibility, lack of warmth, and unfair fighting patterns. Individuals are wise to assess what they do not like about family members and whether their partner is similar in those areas. Upbringing, although significant, is not necessarily an accurate predictor. What individuals have learned is more important. “People are only victims of the past when they choose to be” (Sternberg and Whitney, 1991, p. 14).

- *Do we want children? If so, have we talked about number, timing, birth control, and child rearing? Do we agree about responsibilities for child care?*

Having children. If you did not do so before, take a close look at your partner as a potential parent. Angela explained why she had made a painful decision to

end a relationship: "I concluded that I did not want him to father my children." Couples are remiss if they do not discuss whether they both want to have children. A bizarre case was related by a miserable woman who had suggested to her husband that she was ready to become pregnant. He looked surprised and said, "I do not want to have kids." Such cases are rare, yet to avoid any surprises, talk about desire for children. Discuss parenting and all aspects of raising children, as covered in Chapter 13, including any stereotypic ideas regarding child care. I enjoyed a comment in a study of dual-earner couples: "If fathers want to romp with their children on the living room carpet, it is important that they be willing to vacuum it regularly" (Hawkins and Roberts, 1992, p. 170). Also, a father would share in caring for the romping children.

- *Have we been open with each other about sexuality? Do we have any attitudes that may cause problems?*

Sexuality. Couples may or may not have sexual experience before they marry. Current statistics indicate that most will. In any event, communication about sexual attitudes and desires is highly recommended. This area is not to be avoided because both expect things to work out fine on their own. Dissatisfaction is likely to result if two people do not share similar attitudes about their sexual relationship. Reading together the earlier section on sexual fulfillment as well as other books on the subject is certainly worthwhile.

- *Do we really know each other, including our habits and faults?*

Knowing each other. Spending time together under all kinds of circumstances gives each partner an opportunity to truly get to know the other. Annoying habits can seem cute at first, yet over a long period of time, they erode the relationship. The use of drugs must be evaluated. "I realized that he drank a lot when we went out, but I never dreamed he depended on it so much. Now his drinking is ruining our marriage." People are not apt to change their habits after marriage. In a lively public address, Jim Kern, a professional speaker, told of a young woman who bemoaned her fiancé's drinking. "I am sure he will change after we get married," she said. Kern asked, "How many of you believe that he will?" No hands were raised. "And how many of you think he will find more reasons to drink and blame them all on her?" was the next question. The laughter demonstrated that people know that automatic postmarital changes for the better are rare.

- *Do we have personality differences that may cause difficulties? Do we like each other's personalities and recognize positive traits?*

Personalities. An extravert and an introvert, as classified on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, are likely to report significantly more problems than two who are matched in this category. Creative solutions are in order. One couple decided that they would drive two cars to social events. She, an introvert, wanted to limit her time at such events, whereas he, an extravert, liked to be a part of the action for the duration. Each returned home at a different time, and both were happy.

Personality differences do not necessarily create problems; rather, *unawareness* of the differences causes difficulty. Frequently, a person marries an opposite type and then is annoyed when the partner does not think and act in a similar way.

Couples who are too much alike can also run into difficulty. If neither has strength in the MBTI sensing preference, for example, the couple will be at a disadvantage in matters such as budgeting and tending to details. Two individuals with strong judging preferences are likely to butt heads when personal plans and schedules do not coincide. Deciding how to manage these areas could prevent serious problems.

Certain characteristics such as being caring, warm, understanding, humorous, and unselfish are desirable for individuals and serve to create a positive environment. Liking and appreciating each other's personalities makes a significant difference in both the success of the marriage and the happiness of each person.

- *Are we flexible and do we communicate in open and effective ways?*

Positive communication and flexibility. Not surprisingly, communication is a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction (Meeks, Hendrick, and Hendrick, 1998). Communication skills were identified as the most helpful in a premarital education program (Stanley et al., 2001). Listening may be considered "love in action, and nowhere is it more appropriate than in marriage" (Peck, 1978, p. 128).

Communication is the lifeblood of any relationship, and the love relationship demands communication if it is to flourish. (Branden and Branden, 1982, p. 63)

Even though it is simplistic to say that poor communication leads to low-quality marriages, communication is at the heart of maintaining and enriching a relationship. A mistake is to believe that communication will improve after marriage. If communication and trust are not established early in the relationship, they are unlikely to develop. Taking an interpersonal communication course before marriage is one of the best possible action steps.

Flexibility influences communication and all other aspects of a relationship. Two rigid persons will not bend, and the marriage is what will break. Similarly, the need to be right is the greatest cause of difficulties and deterioration in relationships (Dyer, 1992). Inflexibility and a controlling personality go hand in hand. Controllers go to great lengths to make sure they come out on top and generally do not consider others' feelings or wishes. Controlling methods include criticism, moodiness, anger, threats, and even overprotection. The person may also deny your perceptions. For example, if you object to a hurtful remark, he or she is likely to say, "You just cannot take a joke," even though you are sure it was not a joke. Extremely rigid individuals are unlikely to be good partners.

- *How well do we handle conflict?*

Conflict management. Closely related to communication, the ability to handle disagreement is a pivotal skill in marriage. As discussed earlier in this chapter, two people can "make or break" their chances for a successful long-term relationship by learning about disagreement and fair fighting. John Gottman

(1994a), a well-known researcher in this field, says, "If there is one lesson I have learned from my years of research it is that a lasting marriage results from a couple's ability to resolve the conflicts that are inevitable in any relationship" (p. 28). Before commitment, an assessment of conflict management and a willingness to learn and practice necessary skills are highly recommended.

- *Do we enjoy being together and are we good friends?*

Togetherness and pleasure. Enjoyment of each other's company is essential. Long-term relationships thrive on mutual pleasures. Can the two of you be alone happily while engaging in a variety of pleasurable activities? Can you be alone "doing nothing" and be content?

Friendship. Being friends and not just lovers is bound to increase long-term satisfaction. In a survey entitled "What Keeps a Marriage Going?" (Lauer and Lauer, 1985), both women and men listed "My spouse is my best friend" as their top reason, with "I like my spouse as a person" second. All the ingredients of friendship are necessary in intimate love. "We were friends first and then became sexually attracted to each other. I think that is why our relationship is so successful," said one woman. Friendship is a much better model for what you need in marriage than the media images of romantic love.

Friendship does not have to be present in the beginning. You can be physically attracted and then become friends. The key is that at some time friendship must develop. "Is friendship essential to love? No, but it is essential to love's lasting for it is the foundation of love" (Solomon, 1988, p. 315). Individuals who can honestly say that their partners are their best friends are quite fortunate. Friendship is the glue that holds marriages together and makes them so fulfilling. Without friendship, intimate love can easily die.

- *How will we help each other during periods of crisis?*

Support during crises. From firsthand experiences I realize how significant this question is. If you have encountered such crises as a death in the family, a personal health problem, or a family disruption, you already know how the two of you will react. If you have not, you are wise to discuss possibilities and make some type of commitment to each other. "Being there" for each other is a reasonable expectation and crucial to success in long-term love relationships.

How does the potential partner show support and will that style be helpful to you? A strong thinking preference on the MBTI will immediately begin to problem-solve in a logical way whereas the feeling type will empathize. Certainly, individuals can offer both types of support, although some offer little. Spending a long time with this person means that you are likely to go through rough times together. A high degree of emotional supportiveness makes all the difference in the world.

- *What else?*

Other questions related to your specific relationship may also be in order. The actual discussion of all questions can reveal potential problems.

After you read this chapter and consider the success factors, remember that no person or relationship is perfect. You can use a cost-versus-benefits approach. If you share intimate love, have experienced other relationships, and are committed to equality, then apply a 90:10 rule. In considering all factors, if the relationship is 90 percent positive, go for it! Additionally, be sure that the factors in the unfavorable 10 percent are not the most potentially destructive ones.

Marital Enrichment

Awareness of a high divorce rate and realization that marriage isn't always bliss indicate that **marriage enrichment**, the process of making marriage better, deserves priority. All of the enrichment suggestions offered earlier in this chapter can be used to make a good marriage better and to revitalize one that has declined in quality. For married and other long-term couples, a few areas deserve even more attention.

The sexual relationship over a long duration can easily become an area of benign neglect. Sex therapist Dagmar O'Connor (1985) contrasts lovemaking attitudes and behaviors. Early in a relationship, people describe themselves as being "swept away" by passion and relate the sex act to an "accident that just happened." These feelings usually add to the allure of lovemaking. Over years of togetherness, couples make sex a conscious act that should happen, and then they blame the lack of excitement on being together so long. "That is how it is. After years of being together, the thrill is gone." The thrill in making love does not have to disappear like a puff of smoke. Maintaining a fulfilling sexual relationship is a vital part of couple enrichment.

Enrichment may require therapy. If you decide to see a counselor, go to one recommended by people you trust. Counselors vary in their abilities. Even after you have made your selection, if one of you feels uncomfortable with the therapist, find another one. It is important that each of you feels respected, acknowledged, and valued by the therapist (Weiner-Davis, 1992). Marriage and family therapist Sue Frahm says that most couples come as a last resort, which makes counseling more challenging. She and her husband, Larry, usually begin by asking individuals on a scale from 0 to 10 how committed they are to the relationship. Then they throw out the most critical question: "On a scale of 1 to 10, how willing are you to work on it?" Often the answers to the two questions are not the same. Sue and Larry favor solution-focused and action-oriented therapy. "We believe that if something is a problem to one person, it's a problem in the relationship. Both then must commit to change."

Think of a marriage or any long-term relationship as an investment. What makes an investment portfolio valuable is having more assets than liabilities. Enrichment adds to the assets. A sad commentary on contemporary life is that people will spend more time maintaining houses, automobiles, and other property than they do caring for their relationships. An attitude that "our relationship is precious, and we want to keep it that way" can bring a dream of an enriched marriage to reality. Together, couples can choose how rewarding and successful their relationship will be.

Ending Relationships

“Till death us do part” is no longer a guarantee. The divorce rate since 1960 has more than doubled; the likelihood of divorce now exceeds 40 percent (Raymond, 2001). Contributing to the numbers are certain sociological factors, such as divorce being easier to obtain and being much more acceptable. No matter how personally disquieting the idea of ending a committed relationship, thousands of people yearly find themselves faced with a legal ending to their relationship. This section will focus on divorce; however, much of it is applicable to the ending of other intimate relationships.

Reasons for Seeking an End

“We loved each other so much. I do not know what happened” is not an unusual statement when a relationship ends. Understanding the “why” can help individuals learn from a painful experience. A prime possibility is an inappropriate or poor choice of a partner. An understanding of the needs fulfillment theory, described earlier, will probably reveal unmet needs. One or both partners may decide that the benefits of the relationship are outweighed by the costs. A third person may be involved. As one who does not believe that anyone else breaks up a couple, a recommendation is to examine the weakness in the relationship. Or, perhaps, one individual is simply not committed and engages in repeated self-indulgent outside relationships. In that case, the other is better off alone.

Couples can have unrealistic expectations, and disappointment is the likely result. Or realistic expectations may not have been met. “He is almost never home. If he is not working, he is involved in some community service or leisure-time activity. It is as if I do not exist” is a description of a relationship that falls far short of meeting either a person’s legitimate needs or realistic expectations of a marriage.

Problems such as sexual infidelity, jealousy, drinking, spending money, moodiness, poor communication, and anger increase the odds of divorce (Amato and Rogers, 1997). A particularly hateful behavior is abuse, either verbal or nonverbal. Habitual serious physical abuse gives separation a green light. Staying with an abuser is, in effect, saying that such behavior is acceptable. Leaving a person you have loved and may still have strong feelings for is painful; however, in the long run, an unsatisfying or demoralizing relationship hurts even more.

Counseling as an Alternative

Although ending a relationship can be the best solution, seeking divorce isn’t always advisable. Either extreme—“never divorce, no matter what” or “no problem; just divorce when the going gets tough”—is an insult to the dignity and value of nourishing relationships. Before making the serious decision to divorce, be sure that the reasons are sound and that everything possible has been done to revitalize the marriage. Counseling can be great help in making the decision to divorce or stay married. Even if you think that it is too late, you owe it to yourself to try. You could be like Gina who said, “I would have bet anyone a million dollars that counseling would not work. All I can say now is that I am really happy I did

not make that bet. Our marriage is wonderful, and we continue to make it more so!" Hopefully, if children are involved, you wouldn't hesitate to use all available resources to repair the damage and develop a stronger marriage. In Chapter 13 there is a section on children and divorce.

Letting Go

When faced with the painful reality of ending a relationship, realize that this is a major stressor. Even if you are the one who initiates the breakup, you can expect to experience unpleasant feelings. If you are the one who does not want the divorce, you will sink into one of the "dips" of life. A full gamut of emotions may be experienced, depending on the circumstances.

Depression is common after divorce. Research revealed a significant increase in stressful events and depressive symptoms soon after a divorce that then diminish over the next three years (Lorenz et al., 1997). Whatever is experienced, remember that you are not alone. In response to the increasing incidence of divorce, books have been written, classes and seminars have been developed, and support groups have been formed. If you divorce, numerous resources are available. One that was especially helpful to me is *How to Survive the Loss of a Love* (Colgrove, Bloomfield, and McWilliams, 1991). Picturing the "healing process as more like a lightning bolt full of ups and downs, progressions and regressions, dramatic leaps and depressing backslides" (p. 36) helped me to remain hopeful in the worst of times. Another book, *Rebuilding: When Your Relationship Ends* (Fischer, 1992), is one that Roz, a student, said "saved my life." Fifteen building blocks are described, and the final one is freedom.

The divorce process, like the grief process, is a series of stages. Six are identified by Gullo and Church (1988):

- Shock, usually ranging in duration from 1 day to 1 month and characterized by numbness, disorientation, and disbelief.
- Grief or a feeling of depression of varying duration.
- Setting blame, generally accompanied by anger.
- Resignation, or the good-bye stage, when you decide to let go, which can be either relieving or draining.
- Rebuilding, when you feel like life is good again.
- Resolution, when peace with the pain is acknowledged and you can look back and see evidence of personal growth.

You can gain strength from seeing where you are in these steps and, after time, how far you have come. Because these stages have been experienced by almost every divorcing person, you can feel assured that you, too, will eventually reach the resolution stage. The "traveling time" for most is about 1 year.

A beneficial step is to change the typical thought that divorce is proof of individual maladjustment and the common feeling of regret that your marriage did not last forever.

The value of a relationship lies in the joy it affords, not in its longevity. (There is nothing admirable about two people remaining together, thoroughly frustrated and

miserable, for 50 years.) The ending of a relationship does not mean that someone has failed. It means only that someone has changed, perhaps for the better. (Branden and Branden, 1982, p. 206)

Following are some recommendations for coping with relationship endings.

- Use this book and others to find coping strategies and behaviors to create happiness and raise self-esteem.
- If you are not helping yourself, seek counseling.
- Draw on your support system. You need people. Ideally, talk to people who have gone through the process and feel just fine. Support groups are in almost every community.
- Find a skilled attorney. The legal aspects of divorce require expertise. Learn about current laws so you have input regarding legal decisions. Your future is at stake.
- Be aware of financial consequences. The living standard of the partner who earns more money rises by about 10 percent whereas the one who earns less decreases by about 27 percent (Yip, 2001).
- Pay special attention to your own health and needs.
- Allow yourself all your feelings without getting stuck with any. Prolonged depression and unresolved anger, for example, indicate a need for counseling.
- Resist the temptation to think of yourself as a failure. Instead, realize that the relationship failed. Do, however, examine yourself and make positive changes.
- Let go of any magical quality you assigned to the relationship and recognize that you, as a couple, no longer exist.
- Seek new relationships with both sexes; however, do not try to build an intimate one right away. Keep in mind Erikson's identity stage, which is best to establish again before you are ready for a new relationship. This recommendation is difficult to follow because anyone who has been wounded usually relishes positive attention from the opposite sex. Friendships, at this point, are nourishing. Beyond that, you reduce the potential for success in a future intimate relationship.
- Begin to dream, plan, and live. See the ending as an opportunity, not as a death sentence.

Think of these suggestions as a basic "survival kit." You can add ideas by reading, experiencing, and learning. Self-support and self-respect can be developed by going back to school or taking a course, starting a new project, expanding your network of friends, and becoming involved in a worthwhile organization or cause. Think of each of these new opportunities as: "If I had not divorced or ended the relationship, this probably would not have been a part of my life"

During the initial stages, most find it hard to conceive of the possibility of anything positive; however, almost every divorced person can point out several benefits. One is heightened self-esteem after, and often as a direct result of, the divorce. Expanding one's horizons and becoming independent are boosters to confidence and add to the excitement of life. New opportunities present themselves

and, if taken advantage of, can lead to positive results. Advanced academic degrees, exciting careers, new or renewed hobbies and interests, and exciting interpersonal relationships can be treasures along the way. If the marriage was painful, the relief from stress and misery is a reward in itself. After their divorces, three individuals expressed their rewards and joy.

Tammy: Now that I have a chance to go to school, I am learning about myself as well as preparing for a profession. I needed this more than words can say. My grandma used to say, "Every dark cloud has a silver lining." Now I understand. Losing a husband is hard, but finding yourself is wonderful.

Shirley: From divorce I have learned to love myself, to not forget me and to think of myself, to live for today, to be an independent person, to make my own happiness, to accept my mistakes, to make my own choices, and, most importantly, that life is up to me. In my marriage I gave all of me. I did not even know who I was. I am now a happier, wiser person and am still growing. I realize I have so much to learn . . . so many miles to travel before I sleep.

John: It was not easy to have someone I loved leave me, yet the feelings I have today are worth it. I now realize that there was even more pain when we were together.

All relationships end at some time. Divorce is an ending that was precipitated by a decision. Whether one person likes the decision or not, understanding the process and electing to move toward a positive ending are beneficial.

An ending such as a divorce is not a failure of the self; usually, it just indicates unwise choices. Objectively, individuals can accept a share of the responsibility and resolve to be wiser in the future. They can become optimistic about future relationships and willing to risk new experiences. The ability to let go and say good-bye is a sign of a well-adjusted person. A quote from Dale Carnegie is apt here: "When fate hands us a lemon, let's try to make lemonade."

LOOKING BACK

- Love and intimacy are important in most people's lives. Although education would be very beneficial in the areas of loving, marrying, and divorcing, unfortunately, it is not required. Love as an art requires attention, skill, practice, and priority.
- Passionate love is the "fluff stuff" of which dreams may be made yet usually not realized. Several problems materialize in a passionate-love relationship; a major challenge is jealousy.
- In contrast, intimate love is renewing and rewarding and can serve as a strong foundation for a long-term, mutually satisfying relationship. Components of intimate love have been identified.
- Examination of relationship growth and needs fulfillment reveals a great deal. Intimate love expands as the individuals grow in compatible directions and as the relationship fulfills primary needs.
- Intimacy includes the freedom to be one's genuine self within a relationship and the development of psychological closeness with another person.

- Building intimacy is challenging. Removing barriers is the first step. The rewards are well worth all efforts.
- Conflict management deserves special attention because the harm caused by mishandled conflict is a major source of relationship dissatisfaction and dissolution. Conflict or disagreement is inevitable in intimate relationships. The key to couple success lies in how the conflict is managed. Fair fighting is highly recommended.
- Enrichment is the exception, not the rule. Without attention and priority, love and intimacy can gradually erode. Enriching attitudes and behaviors are essential for long-term successful relationships.
- Despite an increase in numbers of sexually active individuals, people can be woefully ignorant about healthy sexual behaviors. Enrichment makes a difference.
- Both heterosexual and gay/lesbian couples choose to live together as partners. Successful long-term relationships pay consideration to living arrangements and all aspects of couple satisfaction. Cohabitation is defined as living together in a committed relationship. Whether cohabitation influences the probability of marital success is questionable.
- If one chooses to marry, an understanding of marriage helps foster a positive commitment. Shared and traditional types of marriage based on roles and responsibilities are possible, and individuals are wise to agree on the type they prefer.
- Couples can benefit from marriage preparation. Self-examination comes first. Success factors, as identified by research, can be the basis of relevant, and important questions. The discussion of the answers may reveal personal characteristics that are damaging to relationships. For partners who are already in long-term relationships, the questions can serve as guideposts for positive changes.
- In spite of the best intentions, love relationships can end. Divorce rates are high. For those who divorce, resources are available, and people can learn how to end relationships in less hurtful ways. Pain is inevitable as one passes through predictable stages, yet divorce can lead to personal growth, happiness, and an extremely satisfying future.

Intimate love is manifested by giving, receiving, sharing, and growing—two vital individuals forming a strong “we.”

—Sharon Hanna

RESOURCES

Association for Conflict Resolution. (202) 667-9700.
<http://www.mediate.com>
 American Association for Marriage and Family Therapists. (202) 452-0109.
<http://www.aamft.org>

National Board for Certified Counselors. (336) 547-0607.
<http://www.nbcc.org>
 Collaborative Divorce. (415) 383-5600. <http://www.collaborativedivorce.com>
 Fisher’s Rebuilding Seminar.
<http://www.fisherseminars.com>
 Classes and workshops on love, relationships, communication,

and conflict management are offered through community colleges and university continuing education programs.