

attitude—not just Buddy’s presence—that was making her so angry. She told him that she really admired his loyalty—it was one of the things she loved about him. She just worried that Buddy was taking advantage of him. He acknowledged that Buddy could be a “user.” By identifying the issue for what it was—a perpetual problem—and agreeing to work on it with Kara, Tim had effectively accepted her influence. They each became better able to see the other’s perspective. In the end, they agreed that Buddy could continue to use their living room as a crash pad, but less frequently than before.

It took getting to the heart of a perpetual problem before Tim was able to accept influence from his wife. But in most cases, the husband just needs to be open to sharing power and then to get plenty of practice doing so. A husband can start by taking the quiz below, which can assess the current influence level in a relationship. There’s no reason why wives shouldn’t take the quiz as well, since the more open to influence both partners are, the smoother a marriage. Couples can then work through the fun exercises that follow, which offer practice in power-sharing.

ACCEPTING INFLUENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

Read each statement and circle T for “true” or F for “false.”

1. My partner is really interested in my opinions on our basic issues.
T F
2. My partner usually learns a lot from me even when we disagree.
T F
3. My partner wants me to feel that what I say really counts. **T F**
4. My partner wants me to be influential in this marriage. **T F**
5. My partner can listen to me, but only up to a point. **T F**
6. My partner thinks I have a lot of common sense. **T F**
7. My partner tries to communicate respect even when we disagree.
T F
8. If my partner keeps trying to convince me, he or she eventually wins out. **T F**

9. My partner doesn't reject my opinions out of hand. **TF**
10. My partner doesn't think I am rational enough to take seriously when we discuss our issues. **TF**
11. My partner believes in lots of give and take in our discussions. **TF**
12. My partner is very persuasive and usually wins our arguments. **TF**
13. My partner wants me to have an important say when we make decisions. **TF**
14. My partner usually thinks I have good ideas. **TF**
15. My partner thinks I am basically a great help as a problem-solver. **TF**
16. My partner tries to listen respectfully even when we disagree. **TF**
17. My partner usually thinks his or her solutions are better than mine. **TF**
18. My partner can usually find something to agree with in my position. **TF**
19. My partner thinks I'm usually too emotional. **TF**
20. My partner thinks he or she needs to make the major decisions in our relationship. **TF**

Scoring: Give your partner 1 point for each “true” answer, except for questions 5, 8, 10, 12, 17, 19, and 20. Then subtract 1 point for each “true” answer to questions 5, 8, 10, 12, 17, 19, and 20.

6 or higher: This is an area of strength in your marriage. Your partner willingly cedes power to you, a hallmark of an emotionally intelligent marriage.

Below 6: Your marriage could stand some improvement in this area. Your partner is having some difficulty accepting influence from you, which can make a marriage dangerously unstable. Your partner should reread this chapter if he or she is still unclear about why power-sharing is essential. Then the following exercises will help you move forward.

EXERCISE 1: YIELD TO WIN

Below are some common situations faced by couples I've studied. Try to visualize these scenes as if you and your wife were the ones having