

way.) Eventually Julie drifted into the room. I knew she expected me to ask her for help, even though she hates folding laundry. Instead, we both relaxed and enjoyed the music while I continued to fold. Julie pointed out that it had been a long time since we'd been to our favorite local jazz club. So we ended up heading there for dinner. In the end, my turning toward that pile of laundry turned out to be very romantic for us.

IS YOUR MARRIAGE PRIMED FOR ROMANCE?

To get a good sense of how your relationship is faring (or is likely to fare in the future), answer the following questions.

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

1. We enjoy doing small activities together, like washing the dishes or watching TV. **TF**
2. I look forward to spending my free time with my partner. **TF**
3. At the end of the day, my partner is glad to see me. **TF**
4. My partner is usually interested in hearing my views. **TF**
5. I really enjoy discussing things with my partner. **TF**
6. My partner is one of my best friends. **TF**
7. We are spiritually very compatible. **TF**
8. We just love talking to each other. **TF**
9. When we go out together, the time goes very quickly. **TF**
10. We always have a lot to say to each other. **TF**
11. We have a lot of fun together. **TF**
12. My partner tells me when he or she has had a bad day. **TF**
13. I think my partner would consider me a very close friend. **TF**
14. We tend to share the same basic values. **TF**
15. We like to spend time together in similar ways. **TF**
16. We really have a lot of common interests. **TF**
17. We have many of the same dreams and goals. **TF**
18. We like to do a lot of the same things. **TF**
19. Even though our interests are somewhat different, I enjoy my partner's interests. **TF**
20. Whatever we do together, we tend to have a good time. **TF**

Scoring: Give yourself 1 point for each “true” answer.

12 or higher: Congratulations! Turning toward is an area of strength in your marriage. Because you are so often “there” for each other during the minor events in your lives, you have built up a hefty emotional bank account that should support you over any rough patches in your marriage (and keep many at bay). It’s those little moments that you rarely think about—when you forward a joke that’s making the social-media rounds, set the table together, or have a quickie catch-up call while you’re both still at work—that make up the heart and soul of a marriage. Having a surplus in your emotional bank account is what makes romance last and gets you through hard times, bad moods, and major life changes.

Below 12: Your relationship could stand some improvement in this area. By learning to turn toward each other more during the minor moments in your day, you will make your marriage not only more stable but more romantic. Every time you make the effort to listen and respond to what your spouse says, to help him or her, you make your marriage a little better.

Two Obstacles to Turning Toward

In my work with couples, I’ve noticed that two situations in particular tend to interfere with partners’ turning toward each other and building up their sense of trust. Here’s how you can prevent these roadblocks in your relationship.

1. “Missing” a bid because it’s wrapped in anger or other negative emotion.

Sometimes, and especially if a relationship is going through a rocky period, a spouse may not recognize when the partner is making a bid for connection because it comes out sounding negative. The partner then reacts to the negativity and misses the hidden plea. For example, Lena says to her husband, Carl, in exasperation, “It would never occur to you to clear the table, would it?” Carl doesn’t hear Lena’s bid (“Please clear the table tonight”). Instead, he hears criticism, the first horseman. So it’s no surprise that he responds