

The Power of the First Three Principles

I hope that the information in these last three chapters has helped you bolster your marital friendship by updating your love maps, deepening your fondness and admiration, and increasing your tendency to turn toward each other. As we've seen, friendship is critical to a relationship's long-term health because it is the key to PSO, that powerful force that lets you maintain trust and offer each other the benefit of the doubt when conflicts arise. Once you've worked through these first three principles, I suggest you take a moment to fill out the following questionnaire before reading the rest of the book. It will help you assess your current level of PSO and determine whether it's been reinigorated or could use some more attention and reinforcing.

POSITIVE SENTIMENT OVERRIDE QUESTIONNAIRE

Answer the following questions based on your recent interactions with your partner. Circle T for "true" or F for "false."

WHEN MY PARTNER IS IN A BAD MOOD I USUALLY:

1. Feel like I am going to get blamed for some problem. **TF**
2. Want to find out just what my partner is feeling. **TF**
3. Fear a storm of negative emotion may be headed my way. **TF**
4. Assume my partner may simply be a little stressed. **TF**
5. Assume I am about to get personally attacked. **TF**
6. Believe that I can probably help my partner feel better. **TF**
7. Expect that my personality is about to get criticized. **TF**
8. Want to comfort my partner, if I can. **TF**
9. Just want my partner to be more positive. **TF**
10. Think to myself, "Something awful must just have happened." **TF**

Scoring: Count up the number of times you circled F for the odd-numbered items, and add to that total the number of times you circled

T for the even-numbered items. The result is your Positive Perspective Score. (Find out how your partner scored, if he or she is open to sharing.)

6 or higher: You and your partner have a strong friendship, which should greatly benefit your relationship.

Below 6: Your relationship needs work on at least one of the three principles: building love maps, nurturing fondness and admiration, and turning toward. Consider spending some more time on the exercises in chapters 4–6. I hope your current score motivates rather than frustrates you. Although it can take time to master these skills, remember: even small changes can improve a marriage dramatically. This means that every day offers you significant new opportunities to move your relationship forward.

One of the ways that a couple's underlying friendship creates PSO is by helping to balance the power between partners so that neither feels slighted. When you honor and respect each other, you're usually able to appreciate each other's point of view, even if you don't agree with it. When there's an imbalance of power, there's almost inevitably a great deal of marital distress. My next principle focuses on what can happen if one spouse is unwilling to share power with the other—and how to overcome this difficulty. Although power-mongering is more common in husbands, there are wives who have just as hard a time acceding to their spouse's wishes, so my fourth principle really applies to everybody.