

Evan believed in an egalitarian marriage in which the spouses supported each other emotionally and financially. Because in both of these marriages husband and wife had a similar philosophy about their roles, their marriages worked. Of course, were Ian married to Chloe and Hilary to Evan, there'd be enormous friction.

Having similar views about parenting—for example, the values you consider important to pass on to your children—also adds to a marriage's meaning. So do questions about the kind of interaction you should now have with your parents and siblings. Do you consider them part of your family or outsiders you keep your distance from? Even your views of what it means to work—and the significance you attach to your own work—can deepen your sense of connection with your spouse. In other words, to the extent that you feel similarly about these issues, your marriage will be strengthened.

None of this means that you should (or, for that matter, *could*) see eye to eye on every philosophical or spiritual aspect of life. For example, couples who are in the same line of work may draw different meanings from it. Johnny is passionate about being a scientist. His work as a geologist forms a significant part of his identity and colors how he sees the world. He feels personally inspired by the scientific approach with its emphasis on objectivity and analysis, and he takes great pride in being a geologist. If you ask him what he is, he will say he is a geologist first. His wife, Molly, is also a geologist, but she doesn't identify quite so profoundly with her profession. She sees herself as a woman first, rather than as a scientist. Yet they connect in so many other areas that this difference is not a sticking point.

ROLES QUESTIONNAIRE

To get a sense of how well you create shared meaning by supporting each other's roles, read each of the following statements and circle T for "true" or F for "false."

1. We share many similar values in our roles as parents. **TF**
2. We share many similar values in our roles as spouses. **TF**
3. We have many similar views about what it means to be a good friend to others. **TF**
4. My partner and I have compatible views about the role of work in one's life. **TF**
5. My partner and I have similar philosophies about balancing work and family life. **TF**
6. My partner supports what I see as my basic mission in life. **TF**
7. My partner shares my views on the importance of family and kin (sisters, brothers, moms, dads) in our life together. **TF**

Scoring: Give yourself 1 point for each “true” answer. If you score below 3, your relationship could stand some improvement in this area. Turn to the shared-meaning exercise that begins on page 272, and focus on the “roles” section.

PILLAR THREE: SHARED GOALS

Part of what makes life meaningful are the goals we strive to achieve. While we all have some very practical ambitions—like earning a certain income—we also have deeper, more spiritual aspirations. For one person, the goal may be to find peace and healing after a tumultuous, abusive childhood. For another, it may be to raise children who are good-hearted and generous. Many times, we don't talk about our deepest goals. Sometimes, we haven't even asked ourselves these questions. But when we start, it gives us the opportunity to explore something that can have a profound impact on ourselves and our marriage.

Not only will you increase the intimacy of your marriage by sharing your deepest objectives with your spouse, but to the extent that you work together to achieve shared goals, they can be a path toward making your union even richer. For example, both Emilie and Alex were committed to volunteer work for their church. Once their kids were grown, they decided they wanted to leave a spiritual legacy to their community. So he joined the board of directors of the religious school, and she started an adult edu-