

Exercise: Create a Love Map for People Close to You

This exercise is based on a similar activity for spouses that appears in my book *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*. “Love map” is a term I use for that part of your brain where you store all the relevant information about a loved one’s life. It’s based on the idea that being familiar with the details of one another’s lives can help you have happier, more stable relationships. I believe this is true in marriage as well as other close relationships. Whether you’re relating to your spouse, children, friends, relatives, or coworkers, the more you know about their daily experiences, feelings, and preferences, the easier it will be to turn toward them and connect emotionally.

The goal of this exercise is to answer the following questionnaire as the other person would. In this way, you create a love map for somebody to whom you’re close or would like to be closer. You can do it alone, but it’s also fun to do together, with the other person completing a map of your life as you complete a map of his or hers. Don’t think of the exercise as a competition—that’s not helpful. Instead, think of it as a game you can play together to benefit your relationship.

If either of you has trouble answering particular questions, circle those items. Then, when you’re done with the questionnaire, ask one another about the items you couldn’t answer. You’ll probably have lots of items to discuss, which is a good thing. Fostering communication is the whole point.

You may also want to return to this exercise at times over the course of your relationship. You could do it each year on one of your birthdays, for example, to help you stay up-to-date with important changes you’re both going through.

1. Favorite meal:
2. Special hobbies and interests:
3. Two closest friends:

4. Worst enemy or rival:
5. Two people most admired:
6. Favorite movie:
7. Favorite TV shows:
8. Favorite kind of animal:
9. Ideal vacation destination:
10. Favorite sports to watch and follow:
11. First thing this person would buy if he or she won the lottery:
12. One thing this person would like to change about you:
13. One thing you could do to improve your relationship with this person:
14. Favorite types of clothes to wear:
15. Least favorite relative:
16. Favorite relative:
17. Favorite holiday:
18. Least favorite holiday:
19. Ideal job:
20. Favorite way to spend evenings at home:
21. Favorite kind of books:
22. Favorite musical group, composer, or instrument:
23. Favorite ways to spend weekends:
24. Toughest problem this person has faced:
25. Favorite restaurants:
26. Favorite magazine:
27. Places or events this person would find most uncomfortable:
28. Most comforting pastime when sick:
29. Saddest life event:
30. Worst life event:
31. Happiest life event:
32. Favorite way to exercise:
33. Ideal birthday present:
34. Two worst fears or disaster scenarios:
35. Best recent day:
36. Worst recent day:
37. Two things that make this person very angry:
38. Current stresses or worries:
39. Best parts of this person's current job or school life:
40. Worst parts of this person's current job or school life:
41. Favorite way to spend time with friends:
42. Favorite way to get over being sad:
43. Best vacation this person ever had:
44. Favorite way to get your attention:
45. Two reasons this person is proudest of himself or herself:
46. Gift this person would give to you for your birthday:

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47. Fondest unrealized dream:

48. Activity that makes this person feel most competent:

49. Personal improvements this person wants to make in his or her life:

50. Secret ambition: