

# Relationship Work

Take a deep breath and keep breathing.

The best time for a couple to start relationship work is when things are okay and both partners want to make the relationship better. Yet, most wait until their problems have become challenging. Some wait until the pressure is intense and the only options seem to be misery or divorce. Some people come after the divorce, because they need to get along enough to co-parent.

If you see value in your partner and your relationship, shifting your troubled relationship into a healthy and happy one is both desirable and doable. Both partners need to raise their awareness and commit their time, energy and focus to their goals.

It's essential that you accept your part in the issues, look at and change your behavior and embrace the change process. In that experience, the dynamics (how the partners interact) will be observed, reviewed and changed.

As a relationship therapist and coach, I'm more interested in your strengths, what you want from your relationship and what you are going to do to create your desired future. Certainly, problems must be looked at and solved; yet if you focus on strengths, benefits and solutions, this brings hope that your relationship can evolve into the one that you originally wanted.

I start sessions by asking, "What went well...?", assign weekly tasks like the "Three Positive Activities," or the VIA Signature Strengths assessment. I want your unconscious to realize that you also need to focus on the positive. The relationship needs 5:1 positive to neg. experiences.

Often a person is stuck in the negative past. Using a solution-oriented strategy such as the "Problem, Correction and Healing Model" can unblock the issue. In the case of a major stuck point, often due to a trauma, tools such as hypnotherapy or EMDR can work.

For this new opportunity to be successful, an optimistic and hopeful mindset needs to be adopted. This approach embraces the perspective that problems:

- 1) won't last forever,
- 2) can be limited to affecting only aspects of the relationship, and
- 3) are influenced by negative forces from outside of the relationship, which can be limited.

Start by focusing on yourself. Ask yourself questions such as:

Who am I as a partner? Do I like that person's behavior?

What do I like about my relationship? Dislike? What do I want for my relationship? Not want?

What do I have to offer my partner? What else do I want to offer?

What do I want from my partner? What can I accept or not accept?

Looking at your behavior, as it relates to your partner and your relationship. Ask yourself:

What do I want from the relationship work and what am I going to do to achieve that?

What am I going to do to move my relationship in a positive direction?

What personal issues am I going to work on? How will I set-myself-up to improve it?

Take a deep breath and keep breathing. If your relationship is worth being, both people will do what it takes to make it right for themselves and the other person.

I hope that this has been helpful.

*Tom*