

HANDOUTS

DAY FOUR

SafeLives Dash Risk Checklist

Aim of the form

- To help front line practitioners identify high risk cases of domestic abuse, stalking and 'honour'-based violence.
- To decide which cases should be referred to Marac and what other support might be required. A completed form becomes an active record that can be referred to in future for case management.
- To offer a common tool to agencies that are part of the Marac¹ process and provide a shared understanding of risk in relation to domestic abuse, stalking and 'honour'-based violence.
- To enable agencies to make defensible decisions based on the evidence from extensive research of cases, including domestic homicides and 'near misses', which underpins most recognised models of risk assessment.

How to use the form

Before completing the form for the first time we recommend that you read the full practice guidance and FAQs. These can be downloaded from:

<http://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/FAQs%20>

[about%20Dash%20FINAL.pdf](http://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/FAQs%20). Risk is dynamic and can change very quickly. It is good practice to review the checklist after a new incident.

Recommended referral criteria to Marac

1. **Professional judgement:** if a professional has serious concerns about a victim's situation, they should refer the case to Marac. There will be occasions where the particular context of a case gives rise to serious concerns even if the victim has been unable to disclose the information that might highlight their risk more clearly. ***This could reflect extreme levels of fear, cultural barriers to disclosure, immigration issues or language barriers particularly in cases of 'honour'-based violence.*** This judgement would be based on the professional's experience and/or the victim's perception of their risk even if they do not meet criteria 2 and/or 3 below.
2. **'Visible High Risk':** the number of 'ticks' on this checklist. If you have ticked 14 or more 'yes' boxes the case would normally meet the Marac referral criteria.
3. **Potential Escalation:** the number of police callouts to the victim as a result of domestic violence in the past 12 months. This criterion can be used to identify cases where there is not a positive identification of a majority of the risk factors on the list, but where abuse appears to be escalating and where it is appropriate to assess the situation more fully by sharing information at Marac. It is common practice to start with 3 or more police callouts in a 12 month period but **this will need to be reviewed** depending on your local volume and your level of police reporting.

¹ For further information about Marac please refer to <http://www.safelives.org.uk/practice-support/resources-identifying-risk-victims-face>

Please pay particular attention to a practitioner’s professional judgement in all cases. The results from a checklist are not a definitive assessment of risk. They should provide you with a structure to inform your judgement and act as prompts to further questioning, analysis and risk management whether via a Marac or in another way. **The responsibility for identifying your local referral threshold rests with your local Marac.**

What this form is not

This form will provide valuable information about the risks that children are living with but it is not a full risk assessment for children. The presence of children increases the wider risks of domestic violence and step children are particularly at risk. If risk towards children is highlighted you should consider what referral you need to make to obtain a full assessment of the children’s situation.

SafeLives Dash risk checklist for use by Idvas and other non-police agencies² for identification of risks when domestic abuse, ‘honour’- based violence and/or stalking are disclosed.

<p>Please explain that the purpose of asking these questions is for the safety and protection of the individual concerned.</p> <p>Tick the box if the factor is present. Please use the comment box at the end of the form to expand on any answer.</p> <p>It is assumed that your main source of information is the victim. If this is <u>not the case</u>, please indicate in the right hand column</p>	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	<p>State source of info if not the victim (e.g., police officer)</p>
<p>1. Has the current incident resulted in injury? Please state what and whether this is the first injury.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>2. Are you very frightened? Comment:</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

² Note: This checklist is consistent with the ACPO endorsed risk assessment model DASH 2009 for the police service.

<p>3. What are you afraid of? Is it further injury or violence? Please give an indication of what you think [name of abuser(s)] might do and to whom, including children. Comment:</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>4. Do you feel isolated from family/friends? i.e., does [name of abuser(s)] try to stop you from seeing friends/family/doctor or others? Comment:</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>5. Are you feeling depressed or having suicidal thoughts?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>6. Have you separated or tried to separate from [name of abuser(s)] within the past year?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>7. Is there conflict over child contact?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>8. Does [name of abuser(s)] constantly text, call, contact, follow, stalk or harass you? Please expand to identify what and whether you believe that this is done deliberately to intimidate you? Consider the context and behaviour of what is being done.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>9. Are you pregnant or have you recently had a baby (within the last 18 months)?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>10. Is the abuse happening more often?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>11. Is the abuse getting worse?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>12. Does [name of abuser(s)] try to control everything you do and/or are they excessively jealous? For example: in terms of relationships; who you see; being 'policed' at home; telling you what to</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

wear. Consider 'honour'-based violence (HBV) and specify behaviour.				
13.Has [name of abuser(s)] ever used weapons or objects to hurt you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
14.Has [name of abuser(s)] ever threatened to kill you or someone else and you believed them? If yes, tick who:				
You <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Children <input type="checkbox"/>				
Other (please specify) <input type="checkbox"/>				
Tick the box if the factor is present. Please use the comment box at the end of the form to expand on any answer.	YES	NO	DON'T	State source of info
15.Has [name of abuser(s)] ever attempted to strangle / choke / suffocate / drown you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
16.Does [name of abuser(s)] do or say things of a sexual nature that make you feel bad or that physically hurt you or someone else? If someone else, specify who.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
17.Is there any other person who has threatened you or who you are afraid of? If yes, please specify whom and why. Consider extended family if HBV.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
18.Do you know if [name of abuser(s)] has hurt anyone else? Consider HBV. Please specify whom, including the children, siblings or elderly relatives:				
Children <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Another family member <input type="checkbox"/>				
Someone from a previous relationship <input type="checkbox"/>				

Other (please specify) <input type="checkbox"/>				
19. Has [name of abuser(s)] ever mistreated an animal or the family pet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
20. Are there any financial issues? For example, are you dependent on [name of abuser(s)] for money/have they recently lost their job/other financial issues?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
21. Has [name of abuser(s)] had problems in the past year with drugs (prescription or other), alcohol or mental health leading to problems in leading a normal life? If yes, please specify which and give relevant details if known.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Drugs <input type="checkbox"/>				
Alcohol <input type="checkbox"/>				
Mental health <input type="checkbox"/>				
22. Has [name of abuser(s)] ever threatened or attempted suicide?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
23. Has [name of abuser(s)] ever broken bail/an injunction and/or formal agreement for when they can see you and/or the children? You may wish to consider this in relation to an ex-partner of the perpetrator if relevant.				
Bail conditions <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Non-molestation/Occupation Order <input type="checkbox"/>				
Child contact arrangements <input type="checkbox"/>				
Forced Marriage Protection Order <input type="checkbox"/>				
Other <input type="checkbox"/>				
24. Do you know if [name of abuser(s)] has ever been in trouble with the police or has a criminal history? If yes, please specify:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Domestic abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sexual violence	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other violence	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Total 'yes' responses					

For consideration by professional

<p>Is there any other relevant information (from victim or professional) which may increase risk levels? Consider victim's situation in relation to disability, substance misuse, mental health issues, cultural / language barriers, 'honour'-based systems, geographic isolation and minimisation.</p> <p>Are they willing to engage with your service? Describe.</p>	
<p>Consider abuser's occupation / interests. Could this give them unique access to weapons? Describe.</p>	
<p>What are the victim's greatest priorities to address their safety?</p>	

<p>Do you believe that there are reasonable grounds for referring this case to Marac?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>If yes, have you made a referral?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>

Signed		Date	
Do you believe that there are risks facing the children in the family?		Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
		No	<input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, please confirm if you have made a referral to safeguard the children?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Date referral made
	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Signed		Date	
Name			

Practitioner's notes

Resources: Be sure that you have an awareness of the safety planning measures you can offer, both within your own agency and other agencies. Be familiar with local and national resources to refer the victim to, including specialist services. The following websites and contact details may useful to you:

National Domestic Violence Helpline - 0808 2000 247 - For assistance with refuge accommodation and advice

'Honour' Helpline - 0800 5999247 - For advice on forced marriage and 'honour' based violence

Sexual Assault Referral Centres - <http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk/Referralcentres2.php>

Galop for LGBT victims of domestic abuse 0800 999 5428
www.galop.org.uk/

Switchboard

Switchboard operates an information, support and referral service for lesbians, gay men, bisexual and trans people and is staffed with volunteers from these communities.

Helpline: 020 7837 7324 website: <http://switchboard.lgbt/>

Making a Safety Plan

A personal safety plan is a way of helping you to protect yourself. It helps you plan in advance for the possibility of future violence and abuse. It also helps you to think about how you can increase your safety either within the relationship, or if you decide to leave.

You can't stop your partner's violence and abuse - only they can do that. But there are things you can do to increase your own safety. You're probably already doing some things to protect yourself – for example, there may be a pattern to the violence which may enable you to plan ahead to increase your safety.

- Plan in advance how you might respond in different situations, including crisis situations.
- Think about the different options that may be available to you.
- Keep with you any important and emergency telephone numbers (for example, your local Women's Aid refuge organisation or other domestic violence service; the police domestic violence unit; your GP; your social worker, if you have one; your solicitor; and the Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge: 0808 2000 247.
- Are there neighbours you could trust, and where you could go in an emergency? If so, tell them what's going on, and ask them to call the police if they hear sounds of a violent attack.
- Rehearse an escape plan, so in an emergency you can get away safely.
- Pack an emergency bag for yourself, and hide it somewhere safe (for example, at a neighbour's or friend's house). Try to avoid mutual friends or family.
- Try to keep a small amount of money on you at all times - including change for the phone and for bus fares.
- If you have a mobile phone, try to keep it with you.
- If you suspect that your partner is about to attack you, try to go to a lower risk area of the house - for example where there is a way out and access to a telephone. Avoid the kitchen or garage where there are likely to be knives or other weapons; and avoid rooms where you might be trapped, such as the bathroom, or where you might be shut into a cupboard or other small space.
- Be prepared to leave the house in an emergency.

Preparing to leave

Whatever coping strategies you have used – with more or less success - there may come a time when you feel the only option is to leave your partner.

If you do decide to leave your partner, it's best if you can plan this carefully. Sometimes abusers will increase their violence if they suspect you're thinking of leaving, and will continue to do so after you've left, so this can be a particularly dangerous time for you. It's important to remember that ending the relationship will not necessarily end the abuse.

Plan to leave at a time you know your partner will not be around. Try to take everything you will need with you, including any important documents relating to yourself, as you may not be able to return later.

Thinking about leaving and making the decision to leave can be a long process. Planning it doesn't mean you have to carry it through immediately - or at all. But it may help to be able to consider all the options and think about how you could overcome the difficulties involved. If at all possible, try to set aside a small amount of money each week, or even open a separate bank account.

What to pack if you are planning to leave your partner

Ideally, you need to take all the following items with you if you leave. Some of these items you can try to keep with you at all times; others you may be able to pack in your 'emergency bag'.

- Some form of identification;
- Birth certificate;
- Passport, visas and work permits;
- Money, bankbooks, cheque book and credit and debit cards;
- Keys for house, car, and place of work. (You could get an extra set of keys cut, and put them in your emergency bag);
- Cards for any welfare benefits you are entitled to;
- Driving licence (if you have one) and car registration documents, if applicable;
- Prescribed medication;
- Copies of documents relating to your housing tenure (for example, mortgage details or lease and rental agreements);
- Insurance documents, including national insurance number;
- Address book;

- Family photographs, your diary, jewellery, small items of sentimental value;
- Clothing and toiletries.

You should also take any documentation relating to the abuse - e.g., police reports, court orders such as injunctions and restraining orders, and copies of medical records if you have them.

Protecting yourself after you have left

If you leave your partner because of abuse, you may not want people to know the reason you left. It's your decision whether or not you tell people that you have suffered domestic violence; but if you believe you may still be at risk, it might increase your safety if you tell your family and friends, and your employer or colleague what is happening, so that they do not inadvertently give out any information to your ex-partner. They'll also be more prepared and better able to help you in an emergency.

If you've left home, but are staying in the same town or area, these are some of the ways in which you might be able to increase your safety:

- Try not to place yourself in a vulnerable position or isolate yourself;
- Try to avoid any places, such as shops, banks, cafes, that you used to use when you were together;
- Try to alter your routines as much as you can;
- If you have any regular appointments that your partner knows about (for example, with a counsellor or health practitioner) try to change your appointment time and/or the location of the appointment;
- Try to choose a safe route, or alter the route you take or the form of transport you use, when approaching or leaving places you cannot avoid - such as your place of work or your GP's surgery;
- Consider telling your employer or others at your place of work - particularly if you think your partner may try to contact you there;

If you've moved away from your area, and don't want your abuser to know where you are, then you need to take particular care with anything that may indicate your location; for example:

- Your mobile phone could be 'tracked'; this is only supposed to happen if you have given your permission, but if your partner has had access to your mobile phone, they could have sent a consenting message purporting to come from you. If you think this could be the case, you should contact the company

providing the tracking facility and withdraw your permission; or if you are in any doubt, change your phone;

- Try to avoid using shared credit or debit cards or joint bank accounts: if the statement is sent to your ex-partner, they will see the transactions you have made;
- Make sure that your address doesn't appear on any court papers. (If you are staying in a refuge, they will advise you on this);
- If you need to phone your abuser (or anyone with whom the abuser is in contact), make sure your telephone number is untraceable by dialling the relevant number before ringing.

Victims of stalking and domestic violence are now allowed to join the electoral register anonymously, to ensure they aren't put at risk, and do not lose the right to vote. Anyone wanting to register their details anonymously must provide evidence such as an order under the Family Law Act 1996 or the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. If an application is granted, the details that appear on the register only have a person's electoral number and the letter N.

If you stay or return to your home after your partner has left, then you might need an injunction such as an occupation order or a protection order which may have a power of arrest attached (make sure that your local police station has a copy, and that the police know that they need to respond quickly in an emergency). In some areas, there are special schemes to ensure a rapid response by the police (for example, a Community Alarm scheme or a Sanctuary Scheme) that provide advice and additional security measures to make your home safe. However, it's important to know that you do not have to stay at home - with or without an injunction - if you do not feel safe there.

You could also consider the following:

- Changing the locks on all doors;
- Putting locks on all windows if you don't have them already;
- Installing smoke detectors on each floor, and providing fire extinguishers;
- Installing an outside light (back and front) which comes on automatically when someone approaches;
- Informing the neighbours that your partner no longer lives there, and asking them to tell you - or call the police - if they see the abuser nearby;
- Changing your telephone number and making it ex-directory;
- Using an answering machine to screen calls;
- Keeping copies of all court orders together with dates and times of previous incidents and call-outs for reference if you need to call the police again.

If your ex-partner continues to harass, threaten or abuse you, make sure you keep detailed records of each incident, including the date and time it occurred, what was said or done, and, if possible, photographs of damage to your property or injuries to yourself or others. If your partner or ex-partner injures you, see your GP or go to hospital for treatment and ask them to document your visit. If you have an injunction, or there is a restraining order in place, you should ask the police to enforce this; and if your ex-partner is in breach of any court order, you should also tell your solicitor.

In an emergency, always call the police on 999.

An Approach to the challenging problem of when to break confidentiality in domestic violence scenarios

Some factors to consider:

How Urgent is the Situation?

If it's imminent that harm will occur, you need to consider immediate action. If a serious threat is not imminent, then you should have time to obtain consultation and to plan your actions.

Do you have time to Obtain Consultation?

If you do, obtain it and document it. If you don't, then do what you need to do and document it.

Intervene Using Professional Skills and Tools

Try to defuse the anger through ventilation; try to dissuade client from violent solutions; ask for permission to discuss the situation with significant others; attempt to get client to give up weapons or to put away weapons and ammunition.

If the threat is (1) a serious specific threat of harm, (2) against a specific, clearly identified victim and (3) imminent - then consider contacting the police and/or intended victim, whichever has the best chance of preventing the harm.

Ethical Considerations

There is a general ethical principle that counsellors keep information confidential, but this needs to be balanced against other ethical principles such as beneficence, non-maleficence or considering legal requirements.

The duty of confidentiality may not apply when disclosure is required to protect clients or identified others from serious and foreseeable harm or when legal requirements demand that confidential information must be revealed. Counsellors can consult with other professionals when balancing competing ethical principles.

As for predicting violence, it is worthwhile to review a few factors. While no profession has been shown to be able to predict violence with any degree of certainty, somewhat similar to predicting suicide, one should be mindful of the fact that some factors would tend to indicate seriousness:

- (1) A detailed plan of violent action which the client reveals to you;
- (2) Having the means to do it as threatened (e.g., gun, car, etc.);

- (3) A specific threat which seems convincing to you;
- (4) A history of past violent behaviour, or past careless behaviour such as reckless drunken driving which appeared suicidal or homicidal;
- (5) A 'close call' for such behaviour in the past;
- (6) Anything which would indicate desperation or that the client doesn't care about living, or about consequences, anymore.

Tips for Therapist Safety

- (1) Screen potential clients. Conduct an initial assessment by email to determine a client's potential for violence;
- (2) If you're working from an office with others, have a policy in your office about signalling emergencies, and make it clear that staff are authorised to call into your office during a session or to interrupt with a knock on the door if they hear anything which is worrisome in terms of safety;
- (3) If you're working from home and have safety concerns, consider asking a colleague or friend to check in with you by phone when the session is ended, or make sure someone else is in the building;
- (4) Remember that you can break the client's angry stance in any number of ways. For example, you can suddenly say something like, 'Oh, my goodness, I forgot to tell my receptionist that....' and pick up the phone and call someone;
- (5) You can exit the therapy room under a similar pretext or with, 'I'm terribly sorry, but I have to run to the bathroom ... I'll be right back ... please excuse me but nature calls...';
- (6) Try to not have potential weapons in sight – scissors, letter openers, etc. should be in drawers;
- (7) The best seating arrangement is one where you can go to the door without tripping over the client. It's also good for them to be able to exit easily and neither should be 'trapped';
- (8) Be able to call for help. Some offices equip therapists with 'panic buttons' that alert other colleagues and staff to a dangerous situation. If there's a serious risk of violence, keep your door open slightly, so that your colleagues will hear if something bad starts to happen.

Source: helpful info can be found at:

https://walkin.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/duty_to_warn_re_dangerous_clients-1.pdf

Catch my Partner Doing Something Nice for Me

The aim of this homework is to name a day in the forthcoming week when you'll pay attention to your partner's behaviour and catch them doing something nice for you.

Tell your partner which day you've chosen to watch them. Write down below what pleased you about your partner's behaviour. The partner being watched will be aware of the day this is taking place.

The goal of this exercise is to improve each person's perception of the positive sides of their partner, and to encourage communication about these aspects.

Both partners can choose a different day each to be the watcher and the watched. Each should complete a copy of this form when they are the watcher.

Share your experiences with your partner.

Name: **Date:**/...../.....

I chose the following day to 'catch' my partner:

I was happy about:

.....
.....
.....
.....

Caring Days

Both partners are invited to participate in this exercise. Each partner should complete a copy of this sheet.

Choose a day or evening during which you'll pay attention and take care of your partner i.e., pamper them. As the partner doing the pampering, write down what methods you come up with.

As the 'pampered partner', write down what was enjoyable and share your experiences with your partner.

Name: **Date:**/...../.....

I chose the following day to show my care to my partner:

.....

This is what I came up with to do for him / her:

.....

.....

.....

On the day my partner tried to pay special attention to me, I enjoyed:

.....

.....

.....

'Goodie Box'

To be used in conjunction with 'caring days'. Each partner has a 'goodie box' containing slips of paper. They each write down on the slips of paper things their partner could do for them. With these slips, they can provide inspiration for one another during the caring days.

Shared Activities Exercise

Examples of how you could make your joint leisure time more interesting. Read through the suggestions separately and score each one A, B, C or D. Add any further activities you wish to the sheet and score them too. Compare your two lists and in particular notice the joint As or Bs.

Activities we could share:

Go on an outing/weekend getaway

Have a discussion

Play golf/tennis/table tennis

Listen to music

Go for a swim

Go for a walk/guided walk

Prepare a nice meal together

Play with the children

Play board games

Organise card games

Sing

Learn a musical instrument

Go on a bike ride

Visit a museum

Go to the theatre/concert

Maintain a joint hobby

Go on a photo excursion

Go shopping

Have a personal talk

See a sports game

Invite someone over

Call friends

Go out dancing

Attend a talk

Go to an amusement park

Talk about/family/friends

Go out for dinner

Go to a cafe

Hold a party

Have a bath/shower together

Attend a party

Go to a nightclub

Go to the library

Join a club

Wine tasting

Have a pillow fight

Go camping

Read in bed

Do handicrafts	Go fishing
Visit the zoo	Explore a new area
Write a letter	Go to a comedy club
Read the newspapers	Go horse riding
Visit the botanical gardens	Go ice-skating
Look for a new hobby	Buy CDs
Learn a new language	Renovate the home
Rock climbing	Set up a home cinema
Go to the cinema	Attend language classes
Look at photos/home videos	Buy a pet
Learn painting/sculpture	Plan furnishings together
Play music together	Go to a classic car show
Go to a fun fair/antique fair/craft fair	Go fishing
Watch TV	Take a dance class
Talk about a TV programme	Visit family/friends
Gardening	Plan a conference
Discuss your budget	Visit an exhibition
Shared work projects	Listen to music
Have a conversation about a book/film	Have a picnic/BBQ
Participate in community activities/volunteer	Make plans (e.g., holidays)
Attend a sailing class	Read something out to each other

Positive Flooding

Each partner to write down on a paper:

- Three things they love about their partner's physical appearance;
- Three things they appreciate about their partner's character;
- One thing their partner did recently that was appreciated;
- And finally, a global affirmation of their partner (e.g., You are the best husband in the world and I love you very much).

Then ask the partners to sit close together and take it in turns to tell their partner what was on the paper slowly, holding hands if appropriate.

This is a very powerful exercise, particularly at the end of therapy.

My Relationship Vision

Step One: You each separately complete the vision according to what you, individually, would like in your relationship. Use short, descriptive and positive sentences to describe elements in your vision of a deeply satisfying love relationship. Write as many as you like, but ideally up to ten items.

Step Two: Score each item yourself from 1 to 5 on the right-hand side. (1 is very important, down to 5 which is still good but not so important).

Step Three: Compare your list with your partner's list & tick shared elements that score 1 or 2 from both of you. If you agree with elements your partner has thought of but you've missed, add them to your list & score them too.

For example:

- We have fun together*
- We are loving parents*
- We are affectionate with each other*
- We settle our differences peacefully*
- We have physical intimacy*
- We communicate easily and openly*
- We are healthy and active*

Relationship Qualities (positive, short & written in present tense)	Partner 1	Partner 2	Shared

Five Love Languages

	Actions	Communication	Avoid
Words of Affirmation	Spoken words; written cards and letters	Encouraging words; compliments; affirmations	Emotionally harsh words; undue criticism
Quality Time Together	Taking trips; doing this together; going on walks; sitting/talking at home	Quiet places with no interruptions; undivided attention; one-to-one conversations	Too much time with friends or groups; isolation; gaps of time between meetings
Receiving Gifts	Giving gifts; giving time; remembering special occasions;	Private giving of gifts	Materialism; forgetting special events
Acts of Service	Assisting with house chores; ongoing acts of helpfulness; exchanging of chores	Say: 'What can I do for you?' or, 'I will stop and get...' or, 'Today I did... for you'. Making a checklist.	Forgetting promises; over- commitment of tasks; ignoring
Physical Touch	Hugs; pats; sitting close; touches; sex	Mostly non-verbal	Physical abuse; threats; neglect

Each individual often has a different 'love language' to their partner. Look at the list of five love languages above, and work out your top two. If your partner's choices are different from yours, then you may need to show love and caring in a different 'love language'.



**The Sound
Relationship
House**

**Create
Shared Meaning**

**Make Life Dreams
Come True**

Manage Conflict

- Accept Your Partner's Influence
 - Dialogue About Problems
 - Practice Self-Soothing
-

The Positive Perspective

Turn Towards Instead of Away

Share Fondness and Admiration

Build Love Maps

- Know One Another's World

**T
R
U
S
T**

**C
O
M
M
I
T
M
E
N
T**

Copyright © 2000–2011 by Dr. John Gottman. Distributed under license by The Gottman Institute, Inc.

Gottman's Relationship House³

Clearly, there are many parallels between a new home and a new relationship.

Beginning with a solid **foundation** is essential. This is what Dr. Gottman would call the marital friendship – the common courtesy and affection that's the basis for all subsequent interaction. This is built upon knowing each other's 'love maps'.

The **framing** of the walls and weatherproofing are the systems of bids and 'turning toward' that create the structure of the relationship.

Plumbing, mechanical and electrical – the guts of the house – represent the positive perspective, the pervasive feelings of love, hope and goodwill that buffers the relationship from negativity and conflict.

Conflict itself, is represented by **insulation and drywall** which are the ugly, hidden, but necessary, elements of a warm, secure home. Couples need to be able to talk about problems, accept influence from each other and to self-soothe.

Exterior and interior finish represent the beautiful detailed work of supporting dreams and creating shared meaning. This is what you tell yourself about your relationship; the dreams, narratives and myths. Also included are rituals of connection as a couple.

Example Questions for Love Maps

Name one of my hobbies

Who is my favourite music group?

What foods do I hate?

What are two of my aspirations, hopes or wishes?

Who is my least favourite relative?

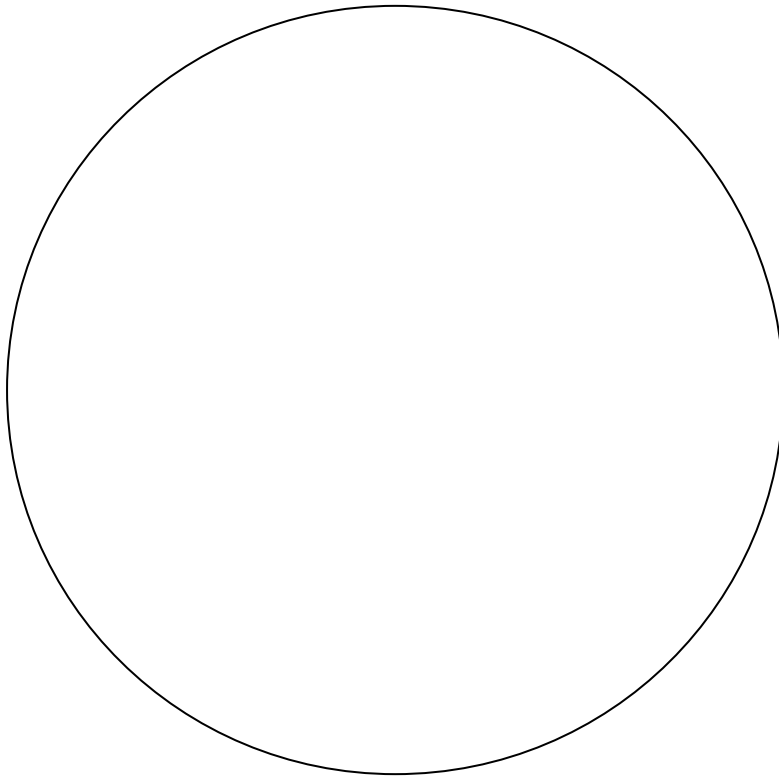
What is your biggest regret in life?

What would your dream holiday be?

³ From 'The 7 Principles For Making Marriage Work' by Dr John Gottman

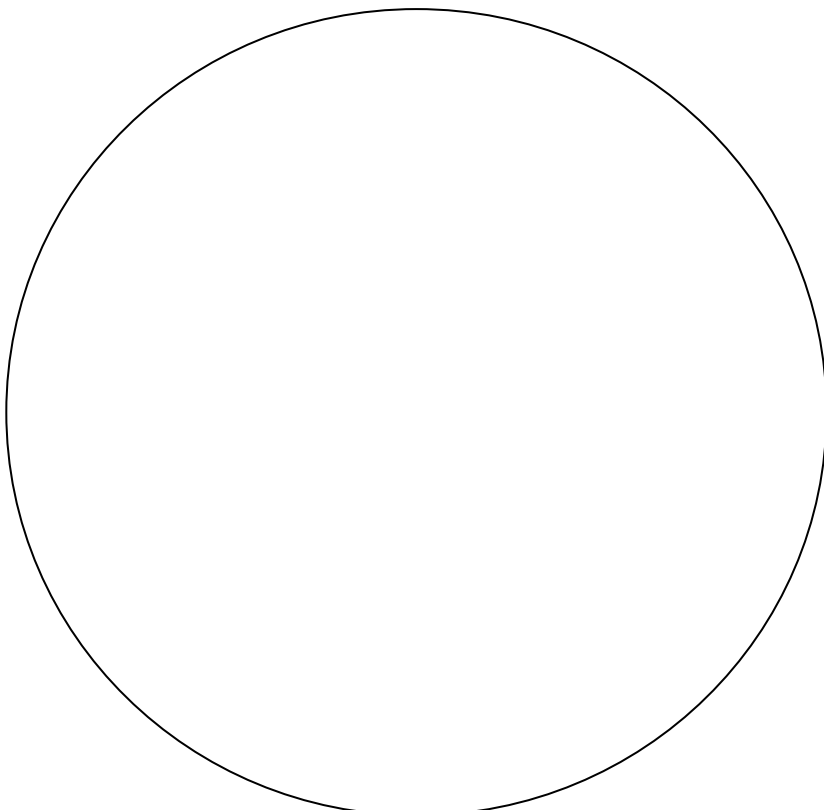
Life Circles

Each partner divides the first circle into a pie-chart to reflect the amount of time currently spent on a number of chosen areas (examples listed) in their life. Then divide the second circle which represents the ideal way in which they would like to divide their time. Partners can compare and discuss.



1. Relationship
2. Career/work
3. Family/children
4. Friends/Leisure time
5. Alone time
6. Health

Actual



Ideal

The Four Critical Moments

Some of the most effective actions you can take for your relationship are rather simple and if you commit to doing them on a regular basis, you'll transform the mundane aspects of your relationship into opportunities to connect.

There are four critical moments of transition in the day which can be utilised to build a strong and lasting relationship: when you wake up; when you leave the house for work; when you return home from work; and when you go to bed.

While this does not exempt you from connecting throughout the day, it provides you connection time during these key transitions.

These transition times are crucial. When you wake up in the morning, you set the tone for the rest of the day. By beginning with emotional connection first thing in the morning, you start your day off on the right foot and set yourself up for more positive experiences with your partner.

When you leave for work is a time when you'll be separating from each other for the day. Connecting at that busy moment allows you to take your partner with you, so to speak. Even if you're separated by distance, you'll carry their support and love with you throughout the day.

When you return home from work is an opportunity to transition from a busy day and refocus on what's most important; your family. Connecting with your partner at that moment provides a refuge from the stress of the day.

Finally, when you go to sleep at night, you conclude the day on a positive note, setting up the following day for even more connection.

Finding these regular times to connect strengthens a relationship. It builds trust and helps you feel that you can rely on your partner. What exactly do you do in these four critical moments? Share an affirmation or an appreciation. Look into each other's eyes for 15 seconds. Give each other a hug. Discuss with each other what would make you both feel connected. You may need different things and that's ok. Alternate or do both. It need not be time-consuming.

Even 30 seconds of connection will do wonders for your relationship as it will keep you cognisant of each other. It's amazing how couples can live their lives without finding meaningful connection. When was the last time you looked into your partner's eyes? Try it and see how it can melt away all of the distractions and take you back to a deep soul connection that you may not have felt for years.

Case Studies

In pairs or threes, each person offers some thoughts about how to handle the following situations. There are no wrong answers; the important thing is to reflect!

1. A couple have seen you for three sessions. Since you started setting homework in week two, one partner says he's forgotten to do the homework for the last two weeks.
2. One partner says they want to save the relationship; the other partner says they want a divorce.
3. You've been seeing an individual client for three months. At the last session she asked you whether she could bring her partner in for some couples counselling.
4. You're seeing a couple for counselling. One partner emails you between sessions asking for tips on how to know if their partner is lying.
5. You're towards the end of the second session of couples counselling when the husband notices his wife is secretly recording what's being said. The session terminates and the next day the husband sends you an email asking whether this recording could be used in court and whether the therapist could be called as a witness.
6. You've been working with a couple for a few months on negotiating issues around divorce. A few months after couples counselling has ended, you get a letter from the husband's solicitor asking if you can provide a report on the husband's mental health for the court.
7. A new client calls you telling you he thinks his wife is 'borderline' and he wants to come to couples counselling for you to address her personality disorder.

First Assessment Session Reference Sheet

1. Welcome and checking Motivation

Welcome and make contact with each partner. Pay particular attention to motivational issues, and the partner who may be more reluctant to be there.

- *'How do you feel about being here, even though we haven't done anything yet?'*
- *'Who was it who first suggested counselling?'*

2. Circular Questioning

Understand the presenting problem (both cognitively and emotionally) from each partner's perspective. 'Circular questioning' is one very useful method.

'I'm going to start by asking a more unusual question. What do you imagine might be your partner's one/two greatest challenges or frustrations in your relationship? You can either write down the one/two challenges or just think about what they are.' (Provide paper or a postcard to write on if necessary).

Let the couple think for a while. Then ascertain who goes first (let couple choose) and get the first partner to share their first guess with their partner. Then check: *'How confident do you feel in your guess on a scale of one to ten?'*

Turn to the other partner: *'Starting with (first issue), is that correct?'* (If so, offer an appreciation to your partner that they guessed correctly). If incorrect, the partner can state what the greatest frustration is.

Then repeat with second issue if necessary.

Repeat the same steps with the other partner.

3. Start the Dialogue if you have time

'Let us choose one of these issues to work on today.'
Explain Imago three-step process to them.

4. End the session by explaining relevant Terms and Conditions such as cancellation policy, whether you may work with the partners individually, policy on transparency or confidentiality.

Assessment Session Scenarios

Work in groups of three (or four with an observer) and rotate.

The 'couple' can choose one of the following scenarios for the therapist to work with and embellish as they wish. The couples can also choose whether they accurately answer the Circular Question or not!

1. **Partner A** is close to their mother; calls her every day and visits her every weekend. A wants B to accept that they have a close relationship and stop criticising. A also wants B to make an effort to be closer to the mother;

Partner B thinks that Partner A is in an unhealthy dynamic with their mother and still tied to her apron strings. B is less close to their family, and sees them once every few months. B doesn't like Partner A's mother and sees her as controlling & aggressive, and thinks that A just agrees with everything she says.

2. **Partner A** is an evangelical Christian and believes in spreading the Gospel. Religion is extremely important to A and A wants to raise their future children in the faith too, reading the Gospels every day.

Partner B is a Christian by birth but prefers to see Christianity now as more of a philosophical way of life. Partner B wants children too, but would prefer a more relaxed approach to raising them, and wants to be open to teaching them about all religions and values.

3. **Partner A:** Has serious doubts about marriage and has recently cancelled the wedding arrangements. There is a fear of commitment and A would rather spend longer dating before deciding on marriage.

Partner B: Desperately wants to be married and isn't prepared to wait indefinitely for their partner to make up their mind over this matter.

4. **Partner A:** Loves to have a good argument occasionally, express themselves energetically and 'say it how it is'.

Partner B: Hates conflict and goes quiet when their partner starts shouting at them. B avoids A for a few days until A has calmed down.

5. **Partner A:** Is a stickler for planning, detail and order and finds their partner 'untidy and chaotic'.

Partner B: Finds that spontaneity in all things is the spice of life and hates being told what to do and when to do it.

6. **Partner A:** Has had an affair but says it meant nothing and has ended it. Partner A wants to put the whole business aside and rebuild the relationship.

Partner B: Walked out on discovering the affair and is ambivalent towards the idea of rebuilding their relationship. B doesn't think it's possible to trust A again.