



Leaning into Love: Building Strong Relationship Bonds Handout

How can you strengthen the bond of love and friendship in your relationship?

You must be willing to lean in towards your partner and focus on the act of giving love.

- **Remember the story of falling in love.** Write down or relate out loud the story of your relationship beginning. What attracted you? What was your experience? What did you feel and how did each of you behave toward each other?
- **Treat each other with fondness and admiration.** Notice the positive qualities that you see in your partner. Share your positive thoughts and feelings about them. Try to do this each day. Think of these qualities when you are together and apart. Appreciating your partner can help you hang in there when problems arise. It can also build your bond of love.
- **Build the Friendship.** Most relationships don't end due to conflict. They end due to a loss of connection and friendship. Reestablish the friendship on a daily basis. Ask your partner about themselves. Be curious about your partner.

Communication Strategies-All relationships have conflict and differences that you must deal with. It's how you manage the conflict that matters!

- **Assume your partner has the best intentions.** When you want to talk about a complaint start out assuming the best intentions. For example, "I know you didn't intend to hurt my feelings but when you didn't include me in your plans it hurt."
- **Pay attention to your tone.** Be polite, "Honey can we talk for a minute?"
- **Describe what makes you upset, without judgment.** "I know you didn't intend to, but you forgot to take out the garbage as you promised."
- **Don't use "you always" or "you never" when sharing a complaint.**
- **Be specific about the complaint.** Don't pile up a bunch of complaints. Make the complaint a one-time specific event.



- **Don't just identify the problem. Identify what you want or need.** “I was disappointed that you made plans with friends for the weekend. I would really like to have some time with you alone.”
- **Learn to recognize when you are flooded with emotion.** If you or your partner are overwhelmed with emotion and cannot listen or respond fairly, then it is better to take a break. Calm down first and then resume the conversation.

Invest in “The Magic 5 Hours a Week.” These are based on the book noted below.

Parting: Say goodbye. Find something out about their day ahead.

2 minutes a day x 5 workdays = 10 minutes

Reunion: Have a conversation to reduce the stress of the day.

20 minutes a day x 5 workdays = 1 hr 40 minutes

Admire and Appreciate: Tell your partner that you admire and appreciate them.

5 minutes a day x 7 days = 35 minutes

Affection: Touch, hold, and kiss before going to bed. Let go of small irritations.

5 minutes a day x 7 days = 35 minutes

Date night: Make a time to relax, connect, talk, and enjoy one another.

2 hours a week

Grand Total = 5 hours a week can keep a partnership on track!

This presentation is based on the work of John M. Gottman Ph.D. and Nan Silver. Read further about his powerful strategies for building strong relationship bonds in, *The Seven Principles for M*