



7 SIGNS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WILL LAST

Based on 40 years of research and thousands of couples.

By The Gottman Institute

INTRODUCTION

What if someone was able to predict with over 90% accuracy whether your relationship will last?

Luckily for you, Dr. John Gottman spent 40 years studying thousands of couples in his Love Lab at the University of Washington. His research discovered predictable differences between happy and unhappy couples.

Together with his wife Dr. Julie Gottman, he developed an approach that not only supports and repairs troubled relationships, but strengthens happy ones as well. Couples who attend his [workshops](#) have a relapse rate that's about half of standard couples therapy.

Over the years, Dr. John Gottman has found seven vital signs that determine whether a relationship will last or fail.

SIGN #1: YOU AND YOUR PARTNER UNDERSTAND ONE ANOTHER

Happy couples are familiar with each other's world. They have what Dr. John Gottman calls a Love Map of their partner's likes, dislikes, dreams, and fears.

Happy couples remember which friends matter most to their partner and which relatives they like least. They know what their partner's favorite TV show is, what their current goals are, and what their biggest stressors are.

Without a detailed Love Map, you don't really know your partner. If you don't really know someone, how can you truly love them?

To enhance your Love Maps, ask your partner questions and remember the answers:

- Who is your best friend right now?
- What are your two of your hopes and aspirations right now?
- What is your favorite song right now?

It can be easy to lose sight of your partner. Life can get in the way. To have a healthy, lasting relationship, it is essential that you build Love Maps and update them over time.

Feeling like you don't understand your partner's world, or they don't understand yours? Work on enhancing your Love Maps [here](#).

SIGN #2: YOUR FONDNESS AND ADMIRATION ARE HIGH

This may be the most significant sign of all. Lasting relationships thrive on fondness and admiration because, when fondness and admiration are high, couples have a positive view of each other. These couples also put a positive spin on the history of their relationship. They glorify the struggle.

If partners view each other and their relationship in a positive light, they are likely to have a lasting and happy future. If they view the history of their relationship in a negative light, then the relationship may be in trouble.

Dr. John Gottman has found that building a culture of appreciation in the relationship is essential to maintaining fondness and admiration. One easy way to build this culture is to write down three of your partner's positive characteristics. Then, write down an event that demonstrates that quality. Share your answers.

Examples:

- Kindness - Jake bought me my favorite fruit on his way home from work
- Gratitude - Susan thanked me for grabbing groceries
- Caring - Tom brought me coffee when I had to work late on a work project

When your partner does something you appreciate, tell them. If you are distracted in the moment, make an effort when you remember to bring it up and thank them.

Nurturing fondness and admiration will not only make your partner feel better - it will bring you closer and make both of you happier.

SIGN #3: YOU TURN TOWARDS EACH OTHER RATHER THAN AWAY

Relationships are built in the micro-moments of togetherness. It is during these little moments of connection that we have a choice: turn towards our partner's bids for connection or turn away.

Happy couples turn towards each other, even during fights, to show they care about and respect one another. You can do this by giving your partner your full attention and staying present with them.

Some examples include:

- Play a board game together
- Go on an adventure together such as hiking or walking through the local farmer's market
- Text your partner during the day to tell them you're thinking about them

These tiny acts are the basis of connection and passion.

Over the course of your relationship, every little connection you make is deposited into your relationship's Emotional Bank Account. So when conflicts do happen, and you've invested with lots of positive deposits, you can pull from your emergency savings of love to maintain trust and connection.

What are some of the ways you could start turning towards your partner more?

SIGN #4: YOU AND YOUR PARTNER INFLUENCE EACH OTHER

Happy couples see love as a team effort and consider each other's feelings and perspectives. They listen to each other and compromise by finding common ground.

Dr. John Gottman's research found that in heterosexual relationships, men are more likely than women to ignore their partner's perspective when working through problems together. To improve the relationship, need to be open to accepting influence from their partner. It's not always the man's fault, though. The same message applies to women.

Let's say your partner wants to buy a new car for \$10,000, but you want to spend that money on a tropical, all-inclusive vacation to Mexico. When the conversation starts to get heated, the best thing to do is to soothe yourself and listen to each other's perspectives. Happy couples show empathy, don't criticize, and really understand their partner's viewpoint. Then they find a solution that works for both of them.



SIGN #5: YOU CAN SOLVE YOUR SOLVABLE PROBLEMS

Dr. John Gottman's research uncovered that every relationship has two types of problems: solvable problems and perpetual problems.

The easiest way to tell them apart is the intensity. Solvable problems are situational, but perpetual problems have an underlying conflict.

For example: Sam and Kris have an agreement that it is Sam's job to mow the lawn every Sunday after breakfast, but lately Sam has been distracted by work obligations. He completely forgets about his agreement.

The grass gets really tall, which upsets Kris. This is a solvable problem. Sam is simply under a lot of stress at work and it has nothing to do with underlying relationship issues.

One possible solution is to put a note on the fridge to remind Sam. Another is for Kris to do it this Sunday, so Sam can complete his project and get back to mowing the lawn the following week. The third option is to hire someone to complete the task this week.

Problem solved.

Below are 5 steps to solve a solvable problem:

- 1. Start the conversation nicely.** When bringing up an issue, it's important to be calm and kind, without being critical of your partner.
- 2. Offer and receive repair attempts.** Dr. John Gottman describes a repair attempt as "any statement or action – silly or otherwise – that prevents negativity from escalating out of control."
- 3. Soothe yourself and your partner.** If you're feeling flooded, take a 20 minute break before returning to work through the problem. Go for a walk, listen to some music, and focus on your partner's positive traits.
- 4. Compromise.** Consider each other's viewpoints and come up with a solution that works for both of you.
- 5. Don't push each other's buttons.** If you know what upsets your partner, stay away from their hot buttons to avoid further escalation.

So what are perpetual problems?

Psychologist Dan Wile says it best in his book *After the Honeymoon*: "When choosing a long-term partner, you will inevitably be choosing a particular set of unresolvable problems."

An example is that Terra wants to spend more time with her friends, but Brandon says this makes him feel lonely. Terra says she needs time away from him. Brandon feels needy to her and she feels suffocated.

This is a perpetual problem. There is a core difference in their personalities and what they need from each other to feel connected in their relationship.

The difference is unlikely to change, so the best way to handle this situation is for Terra and Brandon to accept their differences. They need to adapt to new ways of working with each other if they want their relationship to thrive.

SIGN #6: YOU CAN OVERCOME GRIDLOCKED PROBLEMS

If a couple cannot manage a perpetual problem, the conflict becomes gridlocked, and gridlocked problems eventually lead to emotional disengagement. The goal, according to Dr. John Gottman, is to move from gridlock to dialogue.

For example:

- Susan wants to have children, but Jake does not
- Rick wants Kim to go to church, but Kim is an atheist

Dr. Gottman's research has shown that these types of fundamental differences are unlikely to be solved within the relationship. When happy couples are confronted by these conflicts, they learn to accept and adapt to each other. They use their perpetual problems to grow.

They understand and respect each other's dreams and beliefs. This doesn't mean they always agree, but happy couples acknowledge, listen to each other, and show respect.

Happy couples work together to come up with a temporary compromise and thank each other for sharing their perspective, because it allows them to know each other better.

SIGN #7: YOU CREATE SHARED MEANING

Dr. Gottman's research has shown that shared meaning enhances a relationship by bringing partners closer together.

Below are two ways you can create shared meaning:

- 1. Create relationship rituals.** This can be anything that you do on a regular basis to build connection. It might be sharing a morning routine by drinking coffee together, having a date night once a week, or celebrating Christmas by going to get a tree as a family.
- 2. Work towards a common goal.** Help out in the community through volunteer work or travel together to every state in the United States. It can be any goal that you mutually agree on.

Want to repair your troubled relationship or strengthen a happy one?

If you found the *7 Signs Your Relationship Will Last* helpful, then we recommend learning more by picking up Dr. John Gottman's New York Times bestseller, [*The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*](#). It will give you the skills and knowledge to build a lasting relationship that will thrive.

