

Grab a box of conversation hearts and match each heart you pick to the Gottman activities below to connect on a deeper level with your partner this month.

**Not a fan of the sweet treat?**

*Simply pick a heart concept to discuss with your partner on different days throughout the month, or go through them all in one sitting!*



**Commitment**

**What it is:**

Commitment is demonstrating through your words and actions that you are in the relationship, for better or for worse, and that you can count on each other. It is the actions you take daily to let your partner know you are with them and that you make decisions with them in mind.

**Do this:**

*Reaffirm your commitment to your partner.* Are there ways can you show your partner, with words and actions, that you are committed to them? Think of some ideas and act on them.



**Friendship is the Foundation of Love**

**What it is:**

Are you and your partner friends? Dr. John Gottman found that long-term connection grows from moments of intentional friendship woven throughout your relationship. This foundation supports your ability to make good repairs, have great sex, and stay in a positive perspective.

**Do this:**

*Set an intention to strengthen your friendship this month.* You can do this by taking the time to tune in and respond to your partner in a way that leaves them acknowledged and heard, expressing interest in them and their hobbies, embracing your differences, and being on the same team.



### Stress-reducing Conversation

**What it is:**

The stress-reducing conversation is a time that is set aside from everything else in the day for the two of you to talk one-on-one. To laugh together, to complain about that guy at work, and to just catch up and take each other's emotional temperatures. This daily conversation helps you manage the stress in your daily life (not caused by your relationship) so that outside stressors don't spill over into your relationship. The stress-reducing conversation is commonly the discussion that follows the question, "how was your day?"

**Do this:**

*Try a stress-reducing conversation today.* Take turns where one partner speaks and the other practices active listening. Focus on listening to understand, staying focused on your partner, and expressing support and validation.



### Plan a Date

**What it is:**

This important "we time" is a relaxing and romantic way to stay connected to each other. It could involve an extravagant dinner or a simple night in—as long as it's an intentional time where you're focused on each other without distractions.

**Do this:**

*Plan a date night with your partner for this week!* During your date, be sure to ask open-ended questions and focus on turning towards each other.



### Make Life Dreams Come True

**What it is:**

Understanding the basis of each other's most deeply felt hopes and desires for the future, and supporting each other in them, is one of the most rewarding experiences you can have in a relationship. And sharing a dream and working towards it together is part of what makes life meaningful.

**Do this:**

*Ask yourself these questions and then talk about them with your partner:* What are your life dreams? As you imagine the future, who do you want to be? Does your partner support your dreams? Do you support theirs? Do you have shared dreams and goals in your relationship? What are they and how are you working towards them together?



### Physical Affection

**What it is:**

Expressing physical affection when you're together is vital to feeling connected to each other. This can be as simple as cuddling for a few minutes or a goodnight kiss. These moments of affection are a way to let go of the minor stressors that have built up over the day.

**Do this:**

*Think about ways you can incorporate more physical affection into your day.* Embrace each other before falling asleep, give each other a hug goodbye, have a six-second kiss when you reunite in the evening, or cuddle on the couch while watching your favorite show.



### Six Second Kiss

**What it is:**

John Gottman suggests couples share a six-second kiss each day, which he calls a "kiss with potential" because research has shown that it can often lead to deeper intimacy.

**Do this:**

*What are you waiting for?* Kiss your partner for at least six seconds!



### The Magic Ratio

**What it is:**

In his research, Dr. John Gottman found that the difference between happy and unhappy couples is the balance between positive and negative interactions during conflict. There is a very specific ratio that makes love last. That "magic ratio" is 5 to 1. This means that for every negative interaction during conflict, a stable and happy relationship has five (or more) positive interactions. Having a ratio below 5:1 within conflict is one of the many potential divorce indicators.

**Do this:**

*Is your relationship unbalanced?* Observe how you and your partner interact. For every negative interaction that happens, are there more positive interactions? If not, take it upon yourself to create more positive interactions in your relationship, and also try to notice the small moments of positivity that currently exist that you may have been missing.





## Parting Rituals

### What it is:

A ritual is a structured event or routine that you each enjoy and depend on and both reflects and reinforces your sense of togetherness. A parting ritual is the habit you and your partner have before you part for the day. Happy couples make an effort to learn one thing that is happening in their partner's life before saying goodbye in the morning, both exciting and not so exciting. This could be lunch plans with a best friend, a doctor's appointment, or a call with their parents.

### Do this:

*Examine your parting rituals.* How can you enhance them for deeper connection each day?



## Talk About Sex

### What it is:

It's a fact: couples who talk about sex have better sex. Talking about sex is a powerful way to deepen intimacy and connection. It's common for couples to want to talk about sex, yet they struggle to find the right words to express themselves without sounding critical or feeling embarrassed. But the less direct you are about what you want, the less likely you are to get it, so why not practice?

### Do this:

*Talk about sex more with your partner.* Talk about the actions you enjoyed, or new things you want to try. Saying things like, "Last night when you touched my \_\_\_\_\_, I felt very sexy." or "I love it when we make love in the mornings, let's do more of that!" Remember to be kind, positive, and patient when discussing sex. Both partners should feel heard, safe, and understood. And remember, don't take things too personally.



## Fun and Playfulness

### What it is:

A successful relationship isn't the absence of pain; it's the presence of joy. So often, people with the best intentions understand that "relationships are hard work," and they work so hard that they forget to make time for hopes, laughter, play, and just plain fun.

### Do this:

*Remember the reason why you're in a relationship in the first place.* You want to enjoy your life side-by-side with your loved one, right? Think about ways you can infuse more fun and playfulness into your relationship. How can you prioritize joy? Are there ways you can make the mundane more enjoyable together? What new adventures can you plan?





## Fondness and Admiration

### What it is:

Expressing fondness and admiration is all about vocalizing the characteristics that you love about your partner, big or small, to grow affection and respect in your relationship. This includes statements like, "I'm proud of your accomplishments," or "I appreciate that you are thoughtful."

### Do this:

*It's simple: tell your partner what you love and admire about them.*



## Open-ended Questions

### What it is:

It is very difficult to share your thoughts and emotions by answering yes or no questions, but with open-ended questions, the door for deeper connectedness is unlocked. By communicating with more curiosity and intention, partners can better express themselves and become more aware of each other's feelings and needs.

### Do this:

*In discussions with your partner, create an atmosphere that invites deeper connection. Try asking questions that begin with "How did you...", "In what ways...", "Tell me about...", and "What's it like..."*



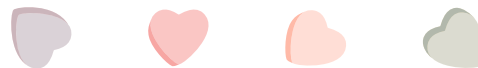
## Trust

### What it is:

Trust allows partners to experience emotional and commitment safety. It opens the door for a deeper connection and gives them the motivation to endure the hard times. Trust is built in the little moments of everyday life. In every interaction, you have the opportunity to turn towards your partner or turn away from them. The essence of building trust is attunement—being aware of your partner's emotion and leaning towards it with genuine curiosity. It includes listening empathically to understand your partner while creating space for conflicting perspectives and engaging non-defensively.

### Do this:

*Build trust in your relationship today and every day by engaging in open communication with your partner. Ask open-ended questions, express your feelings using words, ask follow-up questions, express curiosity about your partner and their emotions, and practice empathy and understanding.*





## Appreciation and Affection

### **What it is:**

It's important to find ways to genuinely communicate affection and appreciation toward your partner. Not only does this make your partner feel valued, but it also enables you to see the positive traits of your partner, instead of focusing on the negative. Here is an example: "Thanks for helping out with the dishes last night and letting me go finish my project for work. You're such a thoughtful and kind person."

### **Do this:**

*Tell your partner a specific thing you appreciate about them.* It can be general or relate to something they did today or this week. When in doubt, use this formula: I appreciate \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_. Even better, make a point to appreciate your partner every day this week and watch how it brings you closer!

