



## Background

**The Relationship Contract**, a concept popularised by Logan Ury, behavioural scientist and author, builds upon the work of renowned relationship experts, Drs. John and Julie Gottman, to offer actionable insights for nurturing healthy and lasting relationships.

By embracing these practices, couples can foster a deeper emotional connection and effectively navigate the inherent challenges in relationships.

**Manage, Don't Eliminate, Conflict:** Recognise that not all disagreements will be resolved. Approximately 69% of conflicts in relationships are perpetual, arising from fundamental differences in personality or lifestyle. These issues are unlikely to be fully resolved. Instead, managing such conflicts through open dialogue and mutual understanding, allows couples to navigate disagreements without damaging their relationship. Focus on understanding your partner's perspective and managing conflicts constructively.

**Prioritise Emotional Connection Over Sexual Frequency:** The frequency of sexual activity does not directly correlate with relationship satisfaction. Building emotional intimacy and ensuring both partners feel safe and connected is more crucial.

**Debunk the 'Never Go to Bed Angry' Myth:** Attempting to resolve conflicts when tired can be counterproductive. It's acceptable to pause a disagreement and revisit it when both partners are rested and calm.

**Embrace Differences:** Compatibility isn't solely about shared interests or values. Differences can enrich a relationship if both partners are willing to listen and learn from each other.

**Invest in Meaningful Interactions:** Expensive date nights aren't necessary for a thriving relationship. Engaging in deep, meaningful conversations and being honest about feelings are what truly matter.



## **The Six-Second Kiss**

Drs. John and Julie Gottman, advocate for the "six-second kiss" as a daily ritual to enhance intimacy and connection between partners. This brief yet meaningful kiss is "long enough to feel romantic," serving as a deliberate moment of bonding amidst daily routines.

### **Benefits:**

- Releases Positive Hormones: Engaging in a prolonged kiss triggers the release of oxytocin, the "love hormone," fostering feelings of closeness and trust.
- Reduces Stress: Kissing lowers cortisol levels, helping to alleviate stress and anxiety.
- Enhances Emotional Connection: Regular intentional kissing reinforces emotional bonds, contributing to a more resilient relationship.

### **Incorporating the Six-Second Kiss:**

- Daily Rituals: Integrate a six-second kiss during departures and reunions to create moments of connection.
- Mindful Engagement: Approach each kiss with presence and intention, focusing on your partner to strengthen your bond.

## **The 5:1 Rule**

Also known as the Magic Ratio, it is a principle derived extensive research on relationship dynamics. The rule states that for a relationship to remain healthy and stable, couples should maintain a ratio of five positive interactions to every one negative interaction during conflicts.

### **Why the 5:1 Ratio Matters**

The balance of positive to negative interactions predicts the overall happiness and longevity of the relationship. Couples who maintain this ratio tend to:

- Navigate conflicts more constructively.
- Build a reservoir of goodwill, making it easier to forgive and move past disagreements.
- Create a sense of emotional safety and trust.



## **What Counts as Positive and Negative Interactions?**

### **Positive Interactions:**

- Showing affection (e.g., a smile, touch, or kind words).
- Expressing appreciation or admiration.
- Active listening and validating your partner's feelings.
- Using humour or playfulness during tense moments.
- Making bids for connection and responding to your partner's bids.

### **Negative Interactions:**

- Criticism, contempt, or harsh words.
- Stonewalling or shutting down communication.
- Eye-rolling or dismissive gestures.
- Raising your voice or becoming defensive.

## **How to Apply the 5:1 Rule**

### 1. Focus on Building Positivity:

- Express gratitude and affection daily.
- Compliment your partner, even for small things.
- Use gentle start-ups during disagreements.

### 2. Repair Negative Moments Quickly:

- If a negative interaction occurs, address it and repair the relationship promptly. For example, apologise or offer reassurance.

### 3. Cultivate Small Positive Rituals:

- Incorporate simple acts like the six-second kiss, morning greetings, or saying "I love you."

### 4. Turn Toward Bids for Connection:

- Respond positively to your partner's bids for attention, affection, or support.

By keeping the 5:1 ratio in mind, couples can maintain a stronger and healthier emotional bond, even during difficult times.



## Self-Reflection Worksheet

### Design for Love

#### Time & Rituals

I can spend time with my partner during the following times:

- Weekday mornings \_\_\_\_\_
- Weekday afternoons \_\_\_\_\_
- Weekday evenings \_\_\_\_\_
- Weekend mornings \_\_\_\_\_
- Weekend afternoons \_\_\_\_\_
- Weekend evenings \_\_\_\_\_

Ideal Weekly Time:

I'd like to spend one-on-one time with my partner on \_\_\_\_\_ occasion(s) per week.  
We can incorporate the six-second kiss during these moments:

#### Favourite Rituals:

Three of my favourite rituals in my current or former relationship are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

One new ritual I'd like to create in the future is:

#### Special Activities

Three special activities I enjoy doing with my partner are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

We'll aim to make these special activities happen every \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., week/month).



## **Navigating Conflict**

### **Unresolvable Disagreements**

The Gottmans found that many disagreements in relationships (around 69%) are perpetual. These arise from core differences between partners. Consider these questions:

What are some recurring disagreements in my relationship?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How can I better understand my partner's perspective on these issues?

How can we discuss these topics with humour and affection, even if we disagree?

### **Bids for Connection**

"Bids" are the moments when our partner reaches out for connection, can be big or small, verbal or nonverbal. Every time your partner makes a bid, you have a choice. You can "turn toward" the bid, acknowledging your partner's needs, or "turn away," ignoring the request for connection. People in successful relationships turn toward each other 86% of the time. Those in struggling relationships turn towards each other only 33% of the time.

I notice my partner makes bids for connection by:

One way I can improve turning toward their bids is:



## Emotional Needs & Intimacy

### Affection

My love language, my preferred way to receive love, is (choose your top two):

- Words of Affirmation
- Quality Time
- Receiving Gifts
- Acts of Service
- Physical Touch

### Intimacy Rituals

- How often do I feel we connect emotionally? \_\_\_\_\_
- How often do I feel we connect physically? \_\_\_\_\_
- A small act of intimacy I'd like to include in our relationship is:

## Stress Management

When I get stressed, I help myself unwind by doing the following:

When I get stressed, I want my partner to support me in the following ways:

(Choose all that apply)

- Listening to me vent
- Distracting me
- Giving me time alone
- Offering me solutions
- Other:

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## The Relationship Contract

### Instructions

Complete this contract with your partner, ideally in a setting where you feel relaxed and romantic. Practice active listening techniques to make your partner feel heard, including echoing their thoughts back to them. Seal it with your signatures, and a kiss!

### Bids for Connection

We commit to noticing when our partner makes a bid and respond by turning toward them as often as we can.

Partners initial here:

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### Time & Rituals:

Each week, we will spend the following one-on-one time together:

- Weekday mornings -----
- Weekday afternoons -----
- Weekday evenings -----
- Weekend mornings -----
- Weekend afternoons -----
- Weekend evenings -----

We'll spend one-on-one time together ----- occasion(s) per week.

We'll spend ----- days/nights together without using our phones each week.



We will make a habit of (e.g. Incorporating the six-second kiss into our daily rituals. Saying one thing we appreciate about each other daily, etc.):

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Some of our favourite shared rituals are (e.g. grocery shopping, movie dates, breakfast in bed):

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We commit to doing these as often as we can.

If we miss \_\_\_\_\_ number of opportunities for quality time per month, we will make it up by (e.g. going away for a weekend, cooking dinner at home together, etc.):

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We also want to try new rituals. Between now and our next check-in, we will adopt the new ritual of (e.g. cooking Sunday brunch, saying what we're grateful for before bed):

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**Special Activities**

Three special activities that really matter to us are (e.g. traveling, fancy restaurants, taking a class together):

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

We commit to making time for these activities with the following frequency (list how often you'll do the special activities you listed above e.g. cooking together – once a week):

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Unresolvable Disagreements**

We acknowledge that not all disagreements can be resolved. For recurring issues we will (e.g. Use humour and patience during discussions. Explore compromise or solutions when possible, etc.):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



**The Contract**

We recognise that relationships take effort.

We choose to continue to invest in each other and our mutual love, satisfaction, and growth.

We understand it's easier to deepen and strengthen a relationship during periods of love and happiness, rather than trying to improve it during a rough patch.

This commitment is drafted for the mutual benefit of all parties in this relationship.

This agreement is entered into by and between:

-----&-----

The term of this agreement shall begin on -----

We agree to revisit this agreement on -----