

<vrh>Chapter One</vrh>

<rrh>Fear of Change</rrh>

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<ct>Fear of Change</ct>

I'm never going to change. Why is he so different now? This is not what I imagined our marriage to be. She was never this boring when we were dating. I thought we were on the same page about what we wanted. Don't ever let someone change who you are.

“Nobody will change me.” There is no bigger, or more common, problem for a marriage than resisting or refusing change. Yet, it is totally understandable—~~c~~Change, or even considering change, messes with our established habits or treasured ways of thinking. It can be a subtle or not-so-subtle criticism of the present—and the need to change is often resisted because it seems like admitting some sort of defect—that we aren’t “good enough.” Plus, people love their habits so much that often, failure to change isn’t seen as a problem at all. In fact, standing one’s ground, *no matter what*, is often seen as admirable, something for one to be proud of. Yet, without change, there is no growth.

Dr. Pepper once saw a very interesting experiment that told her how much people can dislike change—even if it is occasioned by nothing particularly important and requires very little energy or thought. She was at a conference that invited one of the authors of the book, *Leadership and The One Minute Manager*,¹ and so she, among others, had come to the small conference room a bit early to get a good seat. When the speaker arrived, the room was filled. He introduced himself and then told everyone they had to move to the opposite side of the room they

were on. People grumbled and were definitely put out. But they did it. When the dust settled, Spencer Johnson, MD, looked at everyone and said, “Look at how ticked off you got about a very minimal change to what you had planned, and it was a change with very little consequential loss of place or time. How are you going to handle change when it really has consequences?”

So, we don’t like change in general—and some people are phobic about it. They like themselves the way they are—and it’s your problem if you don’t. But resistance to change is everyone’s problem because life and relationships require change—they require that we adjust to changing circumstances. Consider these kinds of situations: ~~a~~ A spouse loses a job and wants to change cities; a partner who was a superior athlete and a great jogging partner develops spine problems and can no longer run; a couple have a child with an intellectual disability requiring more of their time and attention than they had anticipated. All ~~of~~ these cause a change of plans—or a reset on expectations for what you had envisioned life to look like—but they aren’t even the hardest kind of change. The hardest kind is when you or your partner needs to change behavior that affects both of you. When one or both partners refuse to even consider change, it can create a crisis ~~even~~ even in very long-term marriages. We know of what we speak, and not only as professionals. We have both been in marriages that went through the good times—and the bad—and those marriages required major adjustments. Not just once but again and again, over time.

Lillian Hellman, the novelist, once wrote that “people change and forget to tell each other.” Yes, change can sneak up on you—even if the seeds of change have been germinating for a long time. Bottom line ~~here~~: People do change, and even if it’s only one member of the couple who sees ~~themselves on~~ ~~self~~—or ~~their his or her~~ partner in a new way—or is no longer willing to tolerate old behaviors, change is going to be required. And here’s the truth: Just one

person changing disrupts the marital or family system. If even the idea of change is resisted, the sleeping giant of resentment may awaken and fierce encounters are inevitable.

Let's look at three couples, and we will, as we do in each chapter, focus on a first couple who have some *mild* relationship symptoms ~~that for which~~ we can provide some easily-done, and-effective exercises that will help the ~~couple~~ work their way out of an issue; a second couple with *moderate* relationship symptoms ~~that who~~ needs serious help; and finally a third couple with *severe* relationship symptoms—~~aka in other words, the couple~~ they are in big trouble and will definitely need professional intervention(s). Each couple needs a different Relationship Prescription: The first couple needs their Relationship Vitamins, the second warrants Relationship Medicine, and the third requires Relationship CPR in the form of professional intervention when there is a true crisis that warrants intensive intervention(s) or the relationship will end.

Couple #1: Francisco and Abby: Mild Relationship Symptoms Related to Fear of Change

Francisco and Abby are in their late ~~20s~~ twenties and are planning on getting married, but they come from different religious traditions with equally opinionated, strong-willed parents vigorously opposed to a marriage outside of their own families' religious traditions. ~~Neither Francisco nor Abby wants Each of them doesn't want~~ to upset their parents so they have been pretending to each set of parents that they are honoring that family's religious traditions. Now, facing a wedding date, Francisco is suddenly much more insistent on a Catholic ceremony, and Abby had thought they had compromised on a Unitarian minister. Francisco is saying he cannot do that as it would "break my parents' hearts." Abby, who comes from a non-religious Jewish background, is feeling upset because Francisco had said he could be happy with a Unitarian

ceremony and now he is saying he just can't change for his parents's sake. Abby is wondering just how rigid and traditional Francisco will be in the future if he is unable to make this change with her.

Couple #2: Monika and Kareem: Moderate Relationship Symptoms Related to Fear of Change

Monika and Kareem, both ages 48forty-eight, had been high school sweethearts who married in college under the presumption that she would travel with him no matter where his career demanded he go. ~~N-and now~~ she wants to change the deal—and he is sticking to their original “contract.” She has become much more serious about her career over the years—and she thought Kareem knew that. But Kareem is counting on pursuing his career at the highest level and feels that Monika is changing the rules that they both originally accepted. Resentment is building on both sides and they aren't as happy as they used to be.

Commented [ET1]: I added “in college” to account for removing it below. (See note farther down.)

Couple #3: Heidi and Dan: Severe Relationship Symptoms Related to Fear of Change

Heidi and Dan have been married fifteen years and their relationship is full of recriminations, blow-ups, and insults. They used to be inseparable—and that has all changed. When Dan gets mad at her, he uses terrible language and yells at the top of his voice. She has told him she is willing to hear him out but not when he is disrespectful and threatening. Dan says he is who he is, ~~growing having grown~~ up in a “tough neighborhood” where fighting was a sport. He explained that everyone in his family yelled and used rough language and that she should just accept his blowups—he has always been hot-headed, so why should he change? They have even gone to counseling—but Dan does the same thing whenever they have a fight. He feels like Heidi has “gone soft” and that she “isn't the same woman I married—she doesn't appreciate me

for who I am.” Nothing gets resolved and they are both fed up with each other. Dan has refused to go back to counseling and Heidi is talking to a lawyer.

All three of these couples—~~although~~ at different stages and levels of severity in their relationships—have one thing in common: ~~A~~at the core of their issues is a resistance or refusal to change.

This resistance to change isn’t anyone’s fault. It’s biology, baby! In fact, we are hardwired to resist change. Our brains prefer routine and to be in control²—habits and routines can send signals of safety to our brains that all is right in the world. Getting outside ~~of~~our comfort zones when things are uncertain sends strong signals to the limbic system of ~~our~~the brain—triggering a heightened alarm system, which can feel unpleasant or uncomfortable. Research has demonstrated that uncertainty, which is inevitable if we are considering change, can actually be more stressful to us ~~than~~ knowing for sure that there will be negative consequences!³ So, we hold tight to our comfy habits, even if they aren’t helping us or our relationships. We do want to make a distinction here that we are not talking about a diagnosable phobia—~~when-in which~~ fear of change is so extreme it’s debilitating (e.g., you can’t leave your house ~~or~~; take care of yourself or your kids). That is called metathesiophobia and requires professional intervention.

Let’s take a closer look at our couples.

Francisco and Abby: Mild ~~symptoms~~ Symptoms in ~~need~~ Need of Relationship Vitamins

Francisco and Abby have been having trouble creating their own independent household spirituality ~~and~~ /religious practices, have pressure from each of their families not to change their

beliefs or customs, and have resisted making any changes or decisions—and it's stressing them out!

Francisco and Abby met in college and fell in love. They met at a party during their sophomore year, and they found each other attractive and fascinating. They ~~were~~ are from very different cultures, but in the beginning that just added to their mutual fascination. Abby ~~eame~~ comes from a middle-class Jewish background and Francisco ~~eame~~ comes from a well-off Catholic family of Mexican descent. ~~Knowing~~ They knew that their families would not be keen on this pairing for religious reasons (Abby's family ~~was~~ is Jewish and observant; Francisco's family ~~was~~ is Catholic and while not devout, ~~they went~~ go to church for more than just special holidays). The couple handled their differences by not mentioning each other to their families, just telling them that they were "dating around." But after graduation, Francisco proposed to Abby and she accepted; both ~~knew~~ owing of course, that now their relationship would have to be revealed. Since neither of them ~~were~~ was particularly religious, they settled on the idea of joining a Unitarian church and having what they felt ~~was~~ would be a non-denominational ceremony.

When they each told ~~their families~~ his or her family about their compromise, their families reacted angrily. Abby was told that she would be ruining thousands of years of cultural and family tradition and that ~~they~~ her family predicted that she would be raising children in the Catholic faith, which made her parents very unhappy. Francisco's mother cried and told him that ~~they~~ his parents were arranging for him to meet lovely and "moral" women and that he was "settling" and "too young to know what he was doing." Both families held their ground. Visits to each did not give them reassurance that they could solve this issue. Each family wanted ~~the~~ possible grandchildren to be raised in ~~the~~ its family's faith; and while neither family was rude to ~~their child's~~ the other partner, they were not warm either.

Commented [ET2]: Is this ok? Or would "his family" work better?

Commented [ET3]: Clarify the antecedents of "they" and "them." Two possible revisions, depending on which is more accurate:

"Visits to each did not give Francisco and Abby reassurance that they could solve this issue."

"Visits to each did not give the families reassurance that Francisco and Abby could solve this issue."

Commented [ET4]: Is this ok?

This long-expected reaction unexpectedly shook ~~each of them~~ Francisco and Abby up. Family ~~was-is~~ important to them, and the vision of real family opposition unsettled their plans. Coming in for counseling, Abby talked nonstop about never wanting to hurt her mother and ~~her~~ very ~~observant~~ brother. Francisco, deeply in love with Abby, put his head in his hands and ~~didn't~~ ~~didn't~~ see a way forward—but he also ~~didn't~~ ~~didn't~~ want to lose Abby. Both were steeped in ~~their~~ ~~his or her~~ family's idea of tradition and they knew that if they married, major changes would be required. They were frightened about failing or disappointing their families and each other, in the present, and in the future. And truth be told, they were terrified of change. They had picked the Unitarian church as a compromise, but quite honestly, they didn't know that much about ~~the church~~ it. ~~As reality took hold, w~~ While ~~neither of them~~ they had ~~not~~ been really that observant of their religions, they were culturally comfortable with family traditions during holidays such as Hannukah, Yom Kippur, Christmas, and Easter. They had not thought about how being Unitarian would configure their religious or non-religious household.

Abby and Francisco had to find out if their relationship was strong enough to deal with ~~changed~~ coupled with continued parental resistance—or lack of ability for either of them to accept the other person's religion enough to satisfy their parents. Francisco got especially freaked out and just wanted to end the dramatic climate that had now entered their previously happy relationship. He felt he had been too hasty, and when he went to a Unitarian service, it seemed foreign to him. He ~~wanted-wanted~~ to back out of his deal with Abby, but when she erupted about his change of heart, he ~~was-became~~ torn about what to do. Seeing his strong backlash against a change they were making together, Abby felt their pending marriage and potential family ~~were-as~~ endangered.

Commented [ET5]: Perhaps change to “religious”? On first reading, I thought “observant” meant the brother noticed many things. But perhaps the authors mean that he takes his faith very seriously?

Monika and Kareem: Moderate ~~symptoms~~ Symptoms in ~~N~~eed of Relationship Medicine

Monika and her husband, Kareem, ~~both aged 48, had been high school sweethearts and were married in college.~~ They came for help because Kareem wanted to move to another state, and Monika felt that for more than ten years, everything had been on his terms and she was “tired of it being all about Kareem.” It was a fair complaint. Kareem’s job required moves every three years, and Monika wanted to finally stay put in their home she grew to love in Illinois. But Kareem was being offered a major promotion—overseas in London—and it would only happen if they moved.

Commented [ET6]: I removed their ages and that they were high school sweethearts because that information was mentioned above. I also moved the mention of their marriage in college to that spot above because it flowed better there.

The dialogue between them ~~can~~ could be reduced to this:

<dial>

Monika: “I don’t want to lose all my friends again. I don’t want to yank the kids out of school again; I have created and sold three ~~houses~~ in less than twelve years. I have been “the good corporate wife.” But I miss my old community and it was hard to establish one here. I am done. If you want to go, fine. But you’re going without me and we can figure out a long-distance marriage.”

Commented [ET7]: Perhaps change to “homes”? One can create a home but build a house.

Kareem: “Our lifestyle is dependent on my job. You knew this when you said, “I do.” We discussed this thoroughly and you even thought it was going to be adventurous and exciting. And we weren’t kids when we talked about this. I had finished business school, and we knew what this career would look like. We decided that we would do one job and you could have your wish to be there for

the kids. You could stay at home because of my job. This new position will set us up for the future. I know it's hard but it's the deal we made."

</dialog>

It's easy to see each person's position. There is no right or wrong here. Monika ~~had~~_s moved a lot and she ~~wanted~~_s to put down roots—for at least a while. Kareem ~~had~~_s done what he said he would do, —which ~~was~~_s support the family, —and he ~~had~~_s an opportunity to do an even better job of it. What's the answer?

Well, it all depends on whether you think feelings, opinions, needs, and priorities can change over a lifetime. Kareem ~~doesn't~~_s ~~didn't~~_s think they ~~can~~_s ~~could~~_s —he ~~was~~_s thinking like the business-minded person ~~that~~_s he ~~was~~_s. A "deal" was made, and in his world, you stick with the deal. But Monika didn't fully ~~encompass~~_s ~~comprehend~~_s what that transaction would feel like after more than ~~twenty~~_s 20 years. She didn't really know what it would feel like for that long—she ~~only~~_s had ~~only~~_s an idea of what it would feel like. It was fine when the kids were small—her priority was her kids and their future, ~~and~~_s so the moves, not easy at any time, still seemed worth it. But the accumulated wear and tear of setting up a home, then selling it, establishing a new home, and then selling it, —and managing new schools for the kids, new community contacts, etc., wore on her. In addition, she also ~~has~~_s ~~had~~_s put her own passions on the back burner—she ~~had~~_s worked from home as a writer, mostly for popular health magazines, but ~~had~~_s wanted to be able to focus her attention on other writing projects. Her husband ~~had~~_s always made the lion's share of their income, but ~~partially~~_s because she ~~had~~_s focused more on caring for their family and her work ~~had~~_s always come second. She ~~wanted~~_s a new deal—and Kareem ~~wanted~~_s to keep the old one. Furthermore, the old deal ~~promised~~_s much more economic reward than any time in the past. He ~~feels~~_s ~~felt~~_s he, and the family, ~~cannot~~_s ~~could~~_s ~~not~~_s financially afford to miss this chance.

The big problem here is that Kareem ~~doesn't~~~~didn't~~ want to change his upward climb to what he perceived~~s~~ to be success~~s~~, and Monika ~~was~~ craving stability, familiarity~~s~~, and a coherent life. She ~~had~~~~s~~ changed her life and place many times for Kareem—but Kareem, while he ~~knows~~ ~~knew~~ this ~~was~~ hard on Monika, still wanted~~s~~ to invoke their original promise to each other. ~~I—~~ in his mind, ~~it was an~~~~it's an~~-unending contract. Monika talk~~ed~~~~s~~ about how she ~~was~~ afraid to have to make new friends and connections~~s~~, and she talked about how painful it had been for her to feel so lonely in prior mov~~ie~~~~s~~. She said that she fe~~l~~~~t~~~~s~~ worried and anxious about potential disruptions for the kids~~s~~; now that they ~~are-were~~ at an age ~~where-when~~ continuity matter~~ed~~~~s~~ and their social networks ~~are-were~~ growing. She talked about her past and promises she made to herself that she would have a “real home” when she was an adult~~s~~, and now she ~~thinks-thought~~ she ~~was~~~~s~~ in the same situation again. Lastly, she expressed a deep sadness to Kareem and said, “I’m afraid you don’t love me anymore.”

Kareem ~~says-said~~ he does love Monika but he ~~had~~~~s~~ always wanted to prove to himself that he could be respected and be a great provider for her and their family. He ~~doesn't~~~~didn't~~ really know who he would be if he didn’t achieve in his job. He ~~knows-it's~~~~knew it was~~ hard on her and the kids and he hate~~d~~~~s~~ that~~s~~, but he ~~feels-felt~~ like this next step ~~was~~ the “big” one and if he ~~doesn't~~~~didn't~~ do it, he ~~would~~~~’ll~~ regret it forever. He then acknowledged feeling a bit insecure, and as he ~~was~~~~s~~ getting older he worried~~s~~ he ~~was~~~~s~~ losing his grip at work, watching others ~~more~~ junior to him get promoted while he ~~had~~~~s~~ been patient.

Chances are~~s~~, that Kareem and Monika, with effective communication and some effort~~s~~, ~~can-could~~ work through this impasse in a way in which they compromised~~d~~ for ~~one-another~~~~each~~ other. Compromises could include ~~these~~: He ~~will-would~~ not go and ~~will-would~~ look for a job that ~~does-did~~ not require a move but ~~was~~ an equivalent “promotion~~s~~”; she ~~will-would~~ stay and he ~~will~~

~~would only~~ go for only a year with a promise to come back~~;~~; they ~~will-would~~ commute back and forth as a family~~;~~ ~~or~~; she ~~will-would~~ go and this ~~would be~~is the last time~~;~~~~ete~~. If they ~~cannot-could~~ ~~not~~ come up with a compromise~~;~~ and Kareem wanteds to go and she refusedds, then it ~~would be~~'s time for Relationship CPR in the form of seeing a couples² therapist because the marriage ~~is~~ likely ~~would be~~ on the verge of ending. In therapy, they ~~ean-could~~ focus on whether the marriage ~~wa~~is worth saving to them, how to best negotiate resentment regarding Kareem's choice to move and Monika's choice to stay, and how to best support their children.

Heidi and Dan: Severe ~~symptoms~~ Symptoms in ~~need~~ Need of Relationship CPR

Heidi and Dan hadve had a tempestuous relationship from day one. But still, they hadve been together for fifteen years of marriage₁, so there ~~wa~~is a strong tie that ~~keeps-kept~~ them together.

Since they had children, Heidi ~~has~~ had had the bulk of the parenting responsibilities as she hads worked from home, maintaining a small but successful business selling her watercolors. Their sons ~~are-were~~ now pre-teens. Dan owneds a dentistry practice, workeds long hours but adoreds his kids, ~~does-did~~ not believe in divorce₁, and in any case, ~~wa~~is very physically attracted to his wife, as she ~~wa~~is to him. But when Dan ~~gets-got~~ mad, he ~~wa~~is out of control and he ~~feels~~ felt that Heidi should understand that he ~~will-would~~ apologize later, but the way he acteds ~~is-was~~ the way he ~~blows-blew~~ off steam and he ~~ean't-couldn't~~ change, saying, "It's in my blood." He ~~fe~~tels she should know that if he ~~calls-called~~ her names and screameds at her, ~~that~~ he ~~will-would~~ feel bad later and she should just understand and wait and know that he would never hurt her. In fact, he ~~wa~~is angry that she would intimate that he would do such a thing.

Dan ~~was~~ is a rigid guy who ~~wanted~~eds things on his own terms, and every time Heidi ~~wanted~~eds a change, he ~~comes-came~~ back in full resistance mode and ~~said~~ys hurtful and often vulgar words. For example, although he ~~made~~kes an exceptionally good living and they ~~lived~~ in an expensive suburb, he ~~gets-got~~ furious when she ~~wanted~~eds a new car or an expensive vacation. He ~~had~~s called her ugly names—some we are not going to print here. But, quite regularly, ~~those terms included~~ “crazy,” “stupid,” “spoiled,” “old,” and “manipulative,” and when he ~~drinksdrank~~, ~~they were~~ a lot worse. He ~~had~~s been spending more and more time at the bar down the street—he ~~said~~ys just to ~~de~~-stress after work without being “nagged” by Heidi. She ~~wanted~~ed s name-calling and explosive reactions to stop, and he ~~had~~s said that she ~~makes-made~~ too big a deal about ~~his behavior~~it and that ~~was~~is “just the way I am.” Heidi ~~had~~s been seeing a therapist privately to vent her anger ~~and~~, hurt and to figure out if she ~~can-could~~ stay in the marriage. She ~~admitt~~eds to the therapist that she ~~feels-felt~~ lonely and unloved, and even though she and Dan ~~have-had~~ a passionate sex life, she ~~had~~s been flirting with men online because she just ~~wanted~~ed s some man to tell her something nice about her~~self~~. She ~~feels-felt~~ that she ~~cannot-could not~~ take any ~~more~~ abuse and ~~finds-found~~ herself creating “emotional affairs” with men she ~~interact~~eds with through selling her artwork.

<a>Relationship Rx for ~~E~~each Couple

Couple: ~~Abby-and~~ Francisco ~~and~~ Abby

<c>Prescription: Relationship Vitamins: “Your Problem SOLVED” Strategy Problem</c>

Problem-solving strategies, borrowed from ~~Cognitive~~cognitive b-Behavioral ~~Therapy~~ therapy principles, are effective ways to help individuals and couples feel “unstuck” or less overwhelmed by a problem. The “Your Problem SOLVED” strategy is an exercise that Dr.

Griffin-Jessica developed and utilizes with couples in couples-coaching sessions and in her online courses.⁴ The point of this exercise is to take yourself out of what you have been doing, — because let's face it — that just hasn't been working or isn't working well even if what you've been doing is avoiding the problem. Instead, you do something a way you haven't done before. A major goal of this exercise is to help individuals and couples get “unstuck” from a-problems and realize there are ~~is something~~things, often many things, they can do about their problems. On your own and then together, you can brainstorm potential solutions.

First, you State-state the problem clearly. Try to describe the problem in ~~2-3~~two to three sentences and identify what about this issue makes it a problem for you. Ask yourself, what What feelings does this problem bring up for me? How is this problem getting in the way of our relationship? Discuss, as matter-of-factly as you can, the impact of this problem on your lives and relationship.

Second, Outline-outline your goals for solving the problem. What do you want to accomplish in solving this problem? How do you want to feel once you solve this problem? How will your relationship look when this problem is solved?

Third (and this is the part that takes the most work), List-list out any and all possible solutions, even bad ideas. You also want to make sure you always include “do nothing,” because chances are, you've been doing that. By putting “doing nothing” on the list, you now can make a conscious decision to do nothing, rather than ~~avoiding it~~avoid the problem based strictly on your own anxious “freeze” response.

Fourth, Verbalize-verbalize—talk through a possible plan with your partner using one or a combination of more than one possible solution on your list that feels the most comfortable.

Sometimes, if all the solutions are pretty uncomfortable, it may help to ask each other, “What is the least ~~worst~~ bad solution?” and start there.

Fifth, ~~you~~ **E**xecute your plan and follow through with it, encouraging ~~one-another~~ each other along the way.

Finally, ~~you~~ **D**etermine the outcome (successful or not?) and discuss this with your partner. If you think your chosen solution was not successful, that’s ~~okay~~ OK—you can go back to your list, even generate new solutions, and try a different strategy.

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- S: State the problem clearly.
- O: Outline your goal for solving the problem.
- L: List possible solutions, even bad ones.
- V: Verbalize the plan using one or a combination of possible solutions.
- E: Execute the plan.
- D: Determine the outcome and, if not successful, try different solutions.

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So, in this instance, Abby and Francisco ~~go~~ went back to their commitment to each other and how important that was. In other words, ~~they~~ to remembered that they wanted to be together and they wanted to create a new religious tradition between them that still showed respect for the religious traditions they grew up in. Francisco ~~had~~ s to examine why he was wavering in his decision. Was he afraid of change? ~~Does~~ Did his religion mean much more to him than he realized? Or was he just a son who ~~hated~~ s to deeply disappoint his parents? The exercise essentially was a brainstorm of listing ~~out~~ all the potential solutions, even bad ideas, ~~of~~ to how

Francisco ~~feels~~felt, what he really wanted ~~eds~~to for the long run of the marriage, what Abby wanted ~~eds~~ and why, and also how their families' ~~y's~~ reactions affected ~~ed~~ their wedding plan. The two of them ~~will~~would be laying everything out between them and tackling the problem together. For example, Abby says ~~ids~~, "~~W~~what if we could have a civil ceremony, or what if we got married twice ~~—~~once in each faith? Or, in the future, what if we could do a ceremony for each child at birth that celebrates ~~d~~ each of their ancestries ~~?~~?" They could see if they really wanted ~~ded~~ to create a totally different spiritual life in the Unitarian church, or not if Francisco ~~doesn't~~didn't truly feel comfortable there. They could investigate another approach, say, the local Ethical ~~S~~society, another group that recognizes the value of all religions but practices none in a traditional manner. Could that make them feel like a strong, spiritual family? Or, as many couples do, could they educate their children in both ~~of~~ their religious traditions? Could they have a plan to present to their respective families that they ~~were~~were so solid about, ~~that~~ their families would eventually accept the fact that ~~they~~Francisco and Abby had their own spiritual plan? Abby and Francisco came up with a list together and included ~~dd~~ even solutions that were distasteful to each of them. They came up with a strategy they felt comfortable with and, enacted their plan, and while it was bumpy at first, they were surprised at how soon their respective families accepted their approach. Moreover, Francisco felt that he grew as a person by challenging himself about facing change and facing his family as an adult man who was going to be able to act independently from his family.

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Couple: Monika and Kareem

<c>Prescription: Relationship Medicine: The Circles of Priorities</c>

This is a simple exercise that couples can do, first on their own and then later sharing and comparing circles ~~together~~, to see how the time they spend each day is in sync with (or out of sync with) their priorities and values. By comparing your own individual circles and then recognizing similarities or differences in your partner's, ~~we-you~~ can increase ~~your~~ clarity about what really matters and have a better understanding of your frustrations—and some clues for what to do about it!

Each partner should take an ~~eight-by-ten-inch 8-by-10~~ piece of paper and draw a big circle. You are about to do two pie charts.

~~First Circle: List out~~In the first circle, list the most important things in your life. Using “slices” of the pie ~~chart~~² to indicate importance, rank the most important things in your life. So ~~for example~~, the biggest slice is the most important and you can show its magnitude by how big ~~the slice~~^{it} is. Do this for the following values: ~~y~~Your marriage or main relationship, your kids~~;~~ if you have them, your work, your faith, your hobbies (golf, tennis, chess, reading, etc.), your friends, your family, travel, your sex life, and anything else that is seriously important to you. When you are finished, take a second piece of paper and draw a circle and ~~fill in the next circle~~ ~~(create a pie chart based on)~~by how you live an average day.

Setting aside a chunk of the circle for ~~eight~~⁸ hours of sleep, show how a typical weekday is apportioned. ~~For example, doing a graph~~^{ie}Creating “slices” of the pie, draw how much of your day is spent doing the following:

- ~~eeeking~~Cooking, cleaning, or doing home ~~maintenance~~, ~~or~~ yard, and automobile maintenance;

- ~~shopping-Shopping~~ for food or household goods, ~~etc~~;
- ~~feeding-Feeding~~ or maintaining pets, kids, ~~and~~ each other;
- ~~on-On~~ the phone;
- ~~at-Being at~~ work or doing work-related ~~video or phonezooms or calls~~;
- ~~talkingTalking with~~, teaching, or tucking in the kids or hearing them download their day;
- ~~working-Working~~ out or exercising;
- ~~talking-Talking~~ to each other;
- ~~C~~uddling or having sex;
- ~~commuting-Commuting time~~ (if it applies);
- ~~with-Being with~~ friends or neighbors.

Commented [ET8]: This item needs an -ing verb to match the rest of the list. Consider "Talking on the phone" or "Scrolling through your phone".

<noindent>The list goes on. . . .

If you are like most of us, the way you spend your time, and your priorities are probably way out of whack. One way Monika and Kareem ~~can-could~~ talk about the possible move ~~wa~~s to see how it fits into what they ~~say-said~~ their priorities ~~are-were~~. And if their priorities ~~are-were~~ seriously different from ~~one-another~~each other's, then they ~~may-might~~ need to take a different approach and talk through how they ~~might-could~~ negotiate their differences. They could then utilize the Reflective Listening Medicine discussed in ~~Chapter-chapter~~ 2.

Couple: Heidi and Dan

<c>Prescription: Relationship Medicine (in ~~the S~~short ~~T~~-term) and Relationship CPR</c>

Heidi and Dan are caught in an ugly cycle of strong passions: positive when they are being sexually intimate on a regular basis, and negative when Dan strikes out at Heidi when she has angered him, or hurt him, or when he is just because he is in a lousy mood—and Heidi no longer stands up for herself. We wish this wasn't weren't common, but it is. And it is very destructive: It erodes Dan's respect for Heidi, and it can destroy Heidi's sense of self-worth. Further, it can destroy happiness in the marriage, and their each partner's overall happiness in general. This is a tough habit to break—on both sides. Dan has been getting away with it for so long that it seems normal to him, even comfortable, and Heidi has been taking this verbal abuse for so long that, she doesn't know how to redraw boundaries and assert herself. But change here is absolutely necessary.

Commented [ET9]: Is this ok?

<ed>Relationship Medicine: Establishing Word Boundaries</ed>

For Dan and Heidi, just saying “I won't do that anymore” is long gone. So many ugly things have been said too many times. It's clear to us that Heidi and Dan need relationship CPR. But as a holding action before this couple is able to receive the professional help they truly need, it might help to create a list of words that are not permitted. In this case, any word that demeans Heidi's intelligence, choices, looks, or forgetfulness should be included. If there is a trespass, the utterer (this would be Dan in this case) has to give \$50 to Heidi (or whatever amount would sting) or watch a tv-TV show that he doesn't care for, and she does. If there is a string of words, the money can mount up. This has two purposes: one, is just to show the couple how common frequent the word use it is (Dan denied that initially) but also as and to be an incentive to stop. An added twist to this can be added, but only if both parties agree. The money can be used for something that really bothers the offending partner. For example, Heidi was-is a Democrat and Dan was-is very conservative. Heidi, instead of using the money for clothes or other items she

would like, ~~etc, would~~can donate the money to the most liberal Democrat she ~~could~~can think of. This definitely ~~make~~sde Dan hesitate, but it really ~~was~~is a last-ditch effort to see if some civility ~~could~~can be followed.

Commented [ET10]: Achieved?

<ed>Relationship CPR</ed>

Individual ~~Therapy~~therapy was prescribed tofor Dan to address ~~Dan's~~his anger, and it turned out that drinking was involved in most of the extreme episodes. Individual ~~Therapy~~therapy was prescribed ~~for~~to Heidi ~~also~~ to address her self-worth~~as she had begun to do.~~; ~~A~~and ~~Couples'~~couples ~~Therapy~~therapy was prescribed to address unhealthy patterns of communication and increase positive communication.

On a positive note, Dan got slightly better because of the exercise once he realized how ~~commonplace~~ his negative language was toward his wife, and ~~he actually was~~was actually surprised by how frequent it had become. Still, he felt triggered by her (she would say things that made him feel unloved and disrespected too) and he would lose it—and, once again, a barrage of nasty statements would come pouring out of him. Although he ~~had stopped~~was going going to the bar ~~as~~less frequently ~~as~~than before, when he ~~did~~did go, he ~~would come~~came home intoxicated and in a lousy mood. One time finally turned out to be too many, and Heidi packed up and left the house.

Commented [ET11]: "Commonplace" means "commonly found or seen," but I think the intended meaning is something like "frequent." Perhaps use a word like "constant" or "regular" instead?

Even though this might seem unavoidable to the average observer, Dan was shocked because he did love his wife and he assumed that they would go on with the cycle of his outbursts, her anger and hurt, ~~and~~ his remorse and that things would stay the same. When things changed, he begged for couple's ~~counseling~~therapy again, and Heidi relented but stayed at her parents' house and said she would not move back unless there was real change. They went to

couples² therapy for a year, and Dan agreed to talk with a therapist to explore and address his anger and to undergo assessment to determine whether he needed additional intervention for his drinking. We applaud Heidi's decision to pack up and leave under these conditions, because while we ~~understood~~understand that Heidi wanted to stay in her marriage, insulting and humiliating words have no place in any kind of relationship and they can't be allowed to continue. In therapy, Dan learned anger modulation techniques to control his anger, including yoga, meditation, and regular exercise. He ~~also~~ learned also how his abusive comments made Heidi feel and how damaging this was to their relationship. He also began to understand how he was using the same approach ~~to-on~~ her that his father ~~had~~ used on his mother—~~and he had~~ hated his father for that and other brutal acts. Realizing he was carrying on a conflict style he ~~had~~ hated as a child, he tried hard to change his tone and words—and in one session, broke down when he realized~~ed~~ that his children were seeing the same pattern he grew up with. After that, Dan became more respectful, but it still wasn't perfect. He lost his temper and used nasty words, but it was more like once or twice per year compared to several times per week. This ~~would send~~sent them Dan and Heidi back ~~again~~ into therapy for reinforcement of Heidi's right to be spoken to with respect. Dan, through couples therapy, became more aware of using positive statements and compliments ~~etc.~~, toward his wife. Heidi decided that although she hated any blow-ups from Dan, she could handle their much-reduced frequency. After a year, Heidi felt that Dan had changed and was at least, holding himself accountable. That change, while imperfect, made all the difference to her.

<ab>Summary</ab>

Whether ~~it's~~because of our personality or our biology, we know that change isn't easy. We ~~also~~ know also that ~~for~~ those who say "I will never change," ~~they~~ are dooming themselves to

a livesfe that areis likely devoid of satisfaction, and when this happens in couples, it is a relationship killer. Embracing even small steps toward change utilizing strategies such as the worksheets and tools we used here, couples experiencing mild or moderate difficulties can shift their perspectives and, resolve conflicts that may become catastrophic down the road. For those with more severe issues, like Heidi and Dan, there are strategies that can stop the bleeding while awaiting the outcome of professional intervention. For couples at this level, if both parties are willing to work toward change, hope for happy (and much healthier!) marriage is possible.

<notes>

¹ K. H. Blanchard, K. H., P. Zigarmi, and D. Zigarmi, *Leadership and the one-One minute-Manager: Increasing effectiveness-Effectiveness through situational Situational leadership-Leadership(The One Minute Manager)*. (New York, NY, USA: William Morrow and Company, (1996)).

² H. Boschi, H. *Why we We do-Do what-What we We doDo: understanding Understanding our Our brain-Brain to get-Get the best-Best out-Out of ourselves-Ourselves and othersOthers*. (Hoboken, NJ, USA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., (2020)).

³ A. de Berker, A., Rutledge, R., Mathys, C. et al., “Computations of uncertainty mediate acute stress responses in humans,” *Nature Communications* 7, 10996 (2016).

⁴ Love Builder. “Love Builder: Our Training,” *Love Builder*, aAccessed April 5, 2022, <https://lovebuilder.com/our-training>.

</notes>

Relationship Rx style sheet

Terms

anger modulation techniques (*no hyphen*)
attachment science
auto-pay
body image issues (*no hyphen*)
boundary setting (*n.*)
boys' nights
cognitive behavioral therapy
cognitive behavioral therapy principles
Cognitive Triangle
co-parenting
couples therapist (*no apostrophe*)
couples therapy (*no apostrophe*)
deal breaker
demand-withdrawal pattern
expectation setting
lawn care
lawn mowing
LGBTQ
make-up sex
“me” time
naptime
non-monogamy
problem-solve (*v.*)
Reflective Listening Strategy (*when referring to the authors' specific strategy; lowercase when used generally*)
Relationship CPR
Relationship Medicine
Relationship Prescription
Relationship Vitamins
role play (*n.*)
Secure, Insecure, Anxious, Avoidant, Disorganized (*attachment styles, capitalized*)
social media profiles (*no hyphen*)
special-education teacher
yard work

People

Dr. Jessica Griffin *or* Dr. Jessica
Dr. Pepper Schwartz *or* Dr. Pepper

Chapter 1

Francisco and Abby
Monika and Kareem

Heidi and Dan

Chapter 2

Adam and Justin

Misha and Sam

Duke and Dana

Chapter 3

Britney and Marco

Vadim and Sasha

Anu and Akmani (daughter Anori)

Chapter 4

Benito and Ariana

Karlee and Anderson

Glenn and Bernard

Chapter 5

Leo and Melissa

Antonio and Andrea

Will and Cara

Chapter 6

Celeste and D'Andra

Phil and Georgia

Samantha and Carl

Chapter 7

Perry and Jenny

Prisha and Arjun

Mack and Pamilla

Chapter 8

Laura and Lizette

Beatriz and Marco

Camille and Davis

Chapter 9

Leticia and Kai

Lars and Peter

Margo and Jack

Chapter 10

Maddy and Dylan

Charlotte and Garth

Nicolette and Ed (and Lala)

Chapter 11

Tom and Mariana

Keanu and Kate (children Marky and Max)

Brett and Tabitha

Headings

Capitalize headings headline-style.

Do not use colons at the end of headings.

Introduce each couple as “Couple #1”, etc. on first mention. In further headings, do not use “Couple #1” and the like. Keep couple names in the same order in headings, but OK to vary within running text.

First mention of couple:

Couple #1: Francisco and Abby: Mild Relationship Symptoms Related to Fear of Change

Second mention of couple:

Francisco and Abby: Mild Relationship Symptoms Related to Fear of Change

Third mention of couple:

Couple: Abby and Francisco

Prescription: Relationship Vitamins: “Your Problem SOLVED” Strategy Problem

When multiple items are listed as prescriptions, separate the items with a semicolon.

“Relationship Rx for Each Couple” is the only A-level heading in each chapter.

Prescriptions are C-level headings.

Specific exercises recommended to each couple are D-level headings.

Additional style elements

Place words to be defined in quotation marks.

Use quotation marks for words used as words.

In the first section of each chapter in which the couples are introduced, use **present** tense. In the second section about relationship prescriptions, use **past** tense.

When describing how things work in relationships generally, use plural first person, not second

person. Example: *When we are in arguments with our loved ones, our amygdalae detect the threats*, not *When you are in an argument with your loved one, your amygdala detects the threat*.

Use second person when explaining how to do specific exercises or giving instructions.

Capitalize titles of exercises and do not place in quotation marks.