

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 days;
- ~~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 ~~arewere~~. 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~~de 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 to~~for~~ 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~~; ~~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 pera year compared to several times pera 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.