



REAL

Relational Solutions

Take a moment to answer these ten questions on our **RELATIONSHIP INVENTORY**, a simple tool designed to shed light on *what kind* of relationship difficulties you have, and *where they fit* in the broad range of problems couples often face. Try to be as honest and realistic as possible. It's best neither to exaggerate nor downplay your experience.

- 1) When I open up to my partner and share vulnerable feelings I mostly feel:**
 - a. Understood and supported
 - b. Like my partner is interested but not very involved
 - c. Like my partner moves in to "solve my problem" or else gets defensive
 - d. At this point, I don't open up to my partner much

- 2) I feel like I understand my partner's insecurities because:**
 - a. He/she talks to me about them and asks for my support
 - b. He/she mentions them without much discussion
 - c. I can tell when my partner's upset even though he/she doesn't talk about it
 - d. I honestly don't know what's going on inside my partner much of the time.

- 3) Spending time alone with my partner is most often:**
 - a. Relaxing and a treat just hanging out together
 - b. Fun if we are sharing something we both enjoy
 - c. Not as much fun as being with other people together
 - d. A mixed bag, sometimes enjoyable but sometimes tense.

- 4) When we have a conflict we:**
 - a. May blow up or get heated but then talk about it and work it out
 - b. We rarely have conflicts, we sometimes disagree but it just works out somehow on it's own
 - c. There's a lot of conflict, either open or unstated, in our relationship, but we don't address it
 - d. We used to fight a lot, but we've pretty much given up

- 5) In our views on how to live life (money, raising children, values) we:**
 - a. Don't always agree but are able to respect each other's differences, even if they grate from time to time
 - b. Share a lot of common interests and our values seem similar enough to not create problems
 - c. Have very different values on many issues, but it doesn't get us anywhere to try discussing them
 - d. Usually disagree and my partner tries to control many aspects of our lives

- 6) When I share ideas with my partner, about myself or the world, I generally feel:**
 - a. Stimulated and respected; I'm interested in my partner's opinion and feel the same back
 - b. Like my partner listens respectfully but is really more concerned with his or her own thoughts and ideas
 - c. My partner turns to other people for intellectual companionship
 - d. My partner rarely gives me the credit I deserve. Sometimes, he/she just acts like I'm stupid

- 7) I feel judged and criticized by my partner**
 - a. Only rarely
 - b. Occasionally
 - c. Often
 - d. Most of the time

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- 8) **My partner and I are physically affectionate (hold hands, cuddle, put our arms around one another)**
- A lot
 - Occasionally
 - Rarely
 - Almost never
- 9) **Sex with my partner is:**
- A place where we connect, even though it's hard to make the time for it sometimes
 - Satisfying if a bit routine
 - Something I'd like to see more of, but I need to feel more connected first
 - A sore spot between us, something we often wind up fighting about
- 10) **When I think of growing old together I:**
- Imagine it will be great to be unconstrained by our many responsibilities and enjoy the world together
 - Think we will be good companions who can trust one another
 - Wonder if we will have enough in common to share a good life together
 - Worry that without the glue that's been holding us together things may get worse between us, or else we might drift apart

For each "A" answer, give yourself 4 points, 3 for "B", 2 for "C", and 1 for "D." Now add up the sum of the ten questions.

Results:

If you scored between:

35-40 You are rich in intimacy. It may not match up with your idealized vision of a "perfect" relationship, but you are in great shape. While there may be rough spots, as a couple, you are not stuck. Relax and appreciate it! You will find Chapter Two of *The New Rules of Marriage* and its discussion of *why we marry our unfinished business* relevant. Most important to you may be Chapter Eight's discussion of *the untapped power of cherishing*, which will show you how to build on your strengths through appreciation.

30-35 You are in a solid relationship. If you scored a preponderance of "b's" you are highly companionable but might work to further a more passionate connection, and richer communication. Either or both of you may be operating behind walls, as discussed in Chapter Four of *The New Rules of Marriage* in the section on *boundaries*. The book's discussions on *actively going after what you want, speaking out with love, and daring to rock the boat*, (all in Chapter Six) should be helpful. If your score was mixed (highs and lows) you are still a solid relationship although on the surface you may look volatile. Chapter Two's discussion of *the five losing strategies* are relevant for you, as well as Chapter Two and Chapter Five's discussion of *boundary violating behaviors*.

25-30 If your score was made up mostly of "b's" and "c's" then you are in a workable relationship but one that lacks real connection. You must work to open up communication and start sharing more in one another's life. In *The New Rules of Marriage* (Chapter Seven), the discussion on how to *listen and respond generously* will be of particular interest to you. If your score was all over the map, then you are in a volatile relationship and you must learn the skills of mature intimacy – *all five winning strategies* would be important to master. If you don't see much progress, consider a couple's therapist.

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20-25 Your relationship is in trouble. You are either very distant, sharing little intimacy (if your score was consistently low) or you are highly volatile with a lot of unresolved conflict (if there was a lot of scatter in your answers). In either case, it is hard to imagine that you are happy or that this is a healthy emotional environment. You made the right move in selecting *The New Rules of Marriage*. *All of it* will be important for you particularly the book's discussion on how to find a good counselor and how to "train" him or her to be truly helpful.

15-20 Unfortunately, there is little positive between the two of you holding the relationship together. It is extremely doubtful that you can fix this without help. You are desperate to learn how to *move into repair* (Chapters Six and Seven in *The New Rules of Marriage*). When things go wrong in your relationship, they tend to stay unresolved. You are fast losing the good feelings that brought you together. Instead, the relationship has begun to revolve around the losing strategies of *control* and *revenge* (Chapter Two). Use Time-Outs (Chapter Three) and make a commitment to stop abusive behaviors right now. You may find help in Chapter Four's discussion of *clean-up issues* helpful as well.

10-15 You are in a disaster – either a highly psychologically abusive relationship or one with virtually no intimacy at all. You are stuck in either the losing strategy of *retaliation* or, worse, in the final stage of love's degeneration – total *withdrawal* (Chapter Two of *The New Rules of Marriage*). If you have been silenced, you must dare to speak! If you really deal with your dissatisfaction in this relationship, it may well blow up – that is a real risk. On the other hand, your feelings about the relationship are rapidly becoming so toxic you will either break up anyway or, perhaps worse, persist in a situation you find miserable. You need work to either make a decision to embrace the relationship while standing up for yourself in it or leave. In *The New Rules of Marriage*, Chapter eight's discussion on *what to do when your partner's not on board*, will be helpful. You should either transform your relationship or consider leaving it.

No matter where you may be along the spectrum of difficulties, rest assured you are far from alone. Relationships between men and women have never been more difficult. Close to half of all couples getting married will divorce. And there are far too many couples who are not ready to divorce, but who suffer in relationships that lack the closeness and passion we all deserve.

Can we do better than this? YES! Much better, in fact. But we must learn how. For more information on additional resources (books, CDs, and training workshops developed by Terry Real) visit www.realrelational.com

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