GOTTMAN-INFORMED RELATIONSHIP TOOLS

The Sound Relationship House

Seven relationship-building processes, grounded in friendship and trust.

The Gottman Institute's Sound Relationship House is a framework for understanding habits that support healthy relationships. It describes seven levels, supported by trust and commitment. Use it as a conversation starter, not a checklist for a "perfect couple".

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

- Understand the seven levels in plain language
- Identify everyday actions that build connection
- Choose one small step to practise together

Take your time

You can read this guide in one sitting or return to the exercises whenever you need them. No worksheet needs to be completed perfectly.

UNDERSTAND

What this can look like

1. Build Love Maps

Keep learning about each other's changing inner worlds: feelings, worries, pleasures, stressors, hopes and daily realities. Ask open questions and listen without immediately solving.

2. Share Fondness and Admiration

Express specific appreciation and respect. Name real qualities and efforts you value, rather than relying on a vague sense that your partner should already know.

3. Turn Toward

Respond to invitations for connection, sometimes called "bids": a comment, question, touch or attempt to share a moment. Small responses matter when they are mutual and welcome.

4. The Positive Perspective

Build enough goodwill that you can interpret ambiguous moments with curiosity rather than automatically assuming the worst. Safety and accountability still matter.

Notice with curiosity

These are explanations, not labels or tests. You do not need to recognise yourself in every example for the guide to be useful.

GOING DEEPER

The other levels of the house

5. Manage Conflict

Learn to communicate around differences, repair ruptures, and distinguish solvable issues from recurring tensions that call for understanding and dialogue.

6. Make Life Dreams Come True

Support each person's meaningful hopes and goals. Be interested in the values underneath a dream, even when your priorities differ.

7. Create Shared Meaning

Cultivate rituals, traditions, values and a shared sense of what your relationship stands for. This can be simple, such as an evening check-in.

The two supporting walls

Trust and commitment support the model as a whole. These are built through repeated actions, reliability and emotional safety.

IN REAL LIFE

Words and actions to practise

Build friendship

Ask one open question about the other person's current world, not only their schedule.

Manage conflict

Name your experience, listen to theirs, and look for one point you can acknowledge.

Shared meaning

Discuss which small rituals make each of you feel close, and choose one to protect.

Three useful tools

A daily Love Map question: Try: "What has been on your mind recently that I might not know about?" Listen to learn rather than to respond immediately. | A bid for connection: Notice a small invitation such as "Look at this" or "How was your day?" and respond if you can. If you cannot, say when you can reconnect. | A weekly ritual: Choose a manageable recurring moment: tea on Sunday, a ten-minute evening check-in, or sharing one appreciation at dinner.

REFLECTION & PRACTICE

A few gentle questions

1. Which part of our relationship already feels strong?

2. Which of the seven areas needs gentle attention?

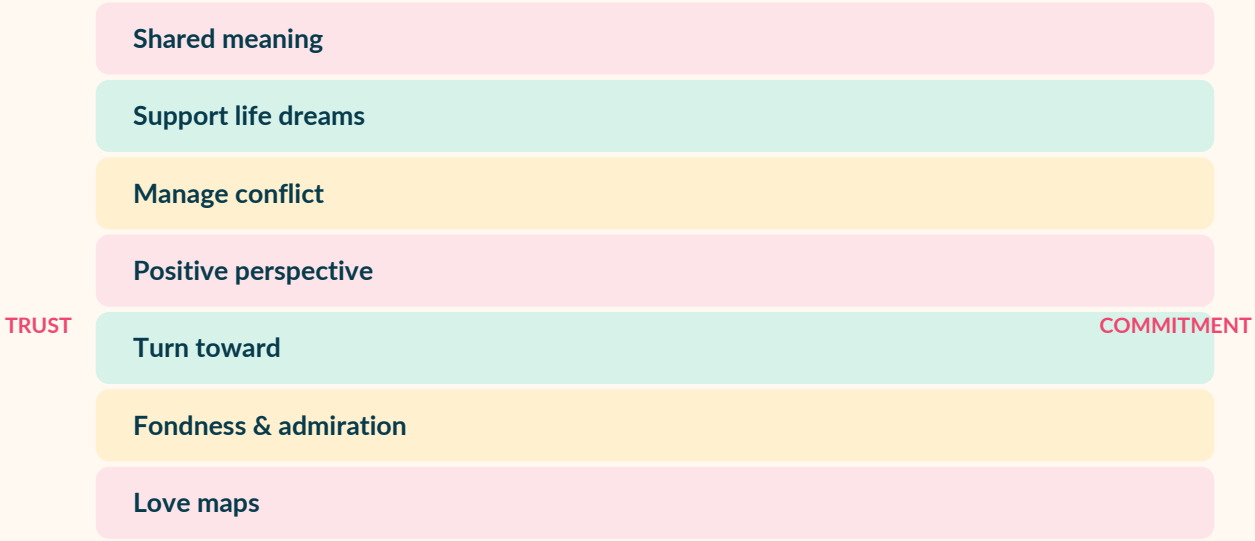
3. What small ritual or interaction could we try this week?

Permission to pause

You can reflect privately, talk through a question with someone safe, or leave it unanswered. There is no “correct” response.

BRING IT TOGETHER

Small steps are still progress



TRY THIS WEEK

1. Ask one genuine Love Map question.

2. Offer one specific appreciation.

3. Respond to a small bid for connection.

4. Protect one shared ritual, while respecting differing needs.

Keep safety in view

The seven-level model, Trust and Commitment, and Sound Relationship House name belong to the Gottman Institute. This is an original educational explanation, not an official or endorsed Gottman worksheet. In relationships involving abuse or coercive control, safety comes before joint exercises.

FURTHER READING & REFERENCES

Gottman Institute, The Gottman Method & Sound Relationship House
https://www.gottman.com/about/the-gottman-method/

Gottman Institute, The Positive Perspective
https://www.gottman.com/blog/the-sound-relationship-house-the-positive-perspective/