



A COUPLES Framework

THE SOUND RELATIONSHIP HOUSE

The Gottmans' map of what makes a relationship work: seven levels you build from the ground up, held between two load-bearing walls, Trust and Commitment. Each level is a skill you can practice, and most of our couples handouts pair with one of them.



THE TWO WALLS

Trust and Commitment run floor to ceiling. Without them, the levels don't hold.

Trust

The sense that your partner has your back and acts with your interest in mind, not only their own.

Commitment

Cherishing this relationship for the long haul, and growing gratitude for what you have instead of comparing it to other options.



THE SEVEN LEVELS

Build from the foundation up. If a level feels shaky, that's usually the one to work on next.

1 Build Love Maps

Know your partner's inner world: their worries, hopes, history, and what's on their mind this week.

Practice it with: **Love Maps**

2 Share Fondness & Admiration

Keep affection and respect active by noticing out loud what you appreciate. This is the direct antidote to contempt.

Practice it with: **Fondness & Admiration**

3 Turn Toward Instead of Away

Notice and respond to your partner's small bids for attention. Small daily deposits build the account you draw on when things get hard.

Practice it with: **6 Hours · Stress-Reducing Conversation**

4 The Positive Perspective

When the friendship underneath is solid, you give each other the benefit of the doubt. You don't force this one; it grows out of the first three.

5 Manage Conflict

Not resolve. Soften your start-up, accept your partner's influence, self-soothe when flooded, and repair afterward. Most conflict is perpetual, so the aim is dialogue, not winning.

Practice it with: **Four Horsemen · Aftermath of a Fight · Gottman-Rapoport**

6 Make Life Dreams Come True

Support each other's deeper aspirations, and look for the dream tucked inside a gridlocked fight.

7 Create Shared Meaning

Build the rituals, roles, and goals that give your relationship its own sense of shared purpose.

You build the house from the bottom up. The friendship floors (Love Maps, Fondness, Turning Toward) are the foundation, and they're what make conflict manageable and meaning possible. If one level feels shaky, start there rather than at the top. Adapted from Drs. John and Julie Gottman's Sound Relationship House theory. My Mental Climb is not affiliated with, endorsed by, or certified by The Gottman Institute.

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