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Relationship Needs Conversation

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STEP 1: Each person should print a copy of the “Rating Your Emotional/Relational Needs” sheet (page 2) and follow the directions on it (rate each need listed below on a scale of 0-to-10, put a star next to your top three needs). When you have completed the form, each person should give it to his/her partner and continue on to the next steps...

STEP 2: List your partner’s top three needs from the sheet (indicated by a star).

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

STEP 3: Now look at the list of needs and pick out two more needs that received high scores but were not indicated as one of their top 3.

- 4. _____
- 5. _____

STEP 4: Have a conversation. Use the guidelines on page 3 to direct your conversation about each other’s relationship needs.

Rate Your Relationship Needs

1. Rate each need below on a scale of 0-to-10 (0 equals no need... 5 equals moderate need... 10 equals high need) to indicate how important it is to you in a relationship.
2. Once you've rated each need, put a star next to the TOP THREE NEEDS that are most important to you.
3. When you're done, give this sheet back to your partner/spouse.

- _____ **AFFECTION:** Your spouse/partner consistently expresses love in a way that is meaningful to you (for example: words, focused attention, quality time, gifts, acts of kindness, cards, kisses, or physical touch).
- _____ **APPEARANCE:** Your spouse/partner gives attention to keeping physically fit; dresses and grooms in a way that you find attractive and tasteful.
- _____ **COMMUNICATION:** Your spouse/partner talks about events of their day and takes interest in hearing about yours. They talk to you about things they do not share with others, including personal thoughts and feelings. When there is disagreement, they remain curious about your point of view. They are willing to adjust their communication style in order to connect with you in ways that seem natural and comfortable to you both.
- _____ **DREAMS:** Your spouse/partner shares a vision for your shared future. They cooperate in creating and achieving goals, both short term and long term, that are satisfying to both of you. They contribute to an optimistic view of your life together.
- _____ **FAMILY: If you have young children in your home:** Your spouse/partner shows love to your children, spends sufficient time with them, takes responsibility for their mental and moral development, works with you in establishing and maintaining behavioral standards, and disciplines them in a way you support.
If you have older children in your home: Your spouse/partner helps in attending to the needs of your children, takes an interest in their lives, helps maintain appropriate rules/expectations, and works to maintain a healthy connection with them.
If you do not have children: Your spouse/partner supports your opinion regarding having or not having children. They support you and participate with you in maintaining a healthy relationship with your family of origin.
- _____ **HOME:** Your spouse/partner helps create a home environment that is comfortable and shares fairly in the responsibilities necessary for maintaining it (funding, cleaning, repairing, preparing meals, etc.).
- _____ **HUMOR:** Your spouse/partner is able to be lighthearted and funny. They sometimes use humor to lighten a dark mood. They appreciate and enjoy your sense of humor; you can laugh at the same things.
- _____ **MONEY:** Your spouse/partner handles money responsibly and contributes to financial stability in the best way they can (through earned income and/or money management). They share your views on saving and spending. They cooperate in establishing a financial plan and monetary goals.
- _____ **PEOPLE:** Your spouse/partner enjoys socializing and making friends. They make time to be around others and look forward to being with you in social gatherings.
- _____ **PLAY:** Your spouse/partner likes to have fun and participates in activities that are enjoyable to you both. They encourage your healthy involvement in recreation and/or hobbies.
- _____ **SEX:** You consistently experience a pattern of sexual activity that is gratifying to you in both frequency (how often you engage in sex) and pleasure (how much you enjoy each experience).
- _____ **SPIRITUALITY:** Your spouse/partner believes in a spiritual reality. They give attention and time to pursuing a better relationship with God or understanding spiritual things (for example: reading, conversations about spiritual things, attending church, participating in groups/events with a spiritual focus, meditation/prayer). They show concern for the spiritual growth of all family members.
- _____ **TRUST:** Your spouse/partner is open and honest; transparent rather than secretive. They take responsibility for establishing a sense of safety and security in your relationship. You have complete confidence in their truthfulness and reliability.
- _____ **VALIDATION:** Your spouse/partner recognizes your thoughts, feelings, interests, and passions as being meaningful and valuable. They respect you, finding worth in who you are and what you do, and let you know it.

Have a Conversation

Preparing for the Conversation

- **Choose a good time.** Plan to do this when you both have time to talk (about 20-30 minutes).
- **Cultivate your curiosity.** Think about the upcoming conversation in terms of what you want to learn from your partner. You may think you have them all figured out, but you don't. Make it your mission to have a better understanding of what your partner desires in the relationship, why it's important to them, and how you might be able to increase their level of satisfaction.

Instructions for the Conversation

- **Take turns.** Each partner gets a chance to ask the other about one of the relationship needs that is important to them. Use the attached Relationship Needs Notes sheet to guide your questions. Switch roles once the first conversation is done.

Instructions for the person asking questions

- **Pick ONE of the relationship needs** that your partner indicated as being most important to them (through a previous assessment or interview) and keep your focus on that one area.
- **Be curious.** Your goal is to understand, not to agree with everything your partner says. You also have to be prepared for feeling defensive if you are made aware that your past efforts have not completely satisfied your partner. Don't worry about that right now. Your goal is to get the clearest possible picture of your partner's need (from their perspective, not yours).
- **Use the Relationship Needs Notes sheet as your guide in asking questions,** but feel free to go wherever curiosity leads you.
- **Take notes.** Summarizing your partner's comments by writing them down will help you remember them.

Instructions to the person answering the questions

- **Answer honestly.** Your goal is to help your partner clearly understand why this area of relationship is important to you and to let them know the specific things they could do that would increase your satisfaction in this area. If you really desire something, take the risk of saying it.
- **Focus on the positive.** You should NOT criticize past behaviors or failures. In fact, try not to even use negative examples from the past, but feel free to point to positive examples from the past (times your partner did a good job in this area). Your partner will likely already be struggling with an awareness of their past inadequacies, so you do not need to add any judgment on top of it.

Reviewing the Conversation

- **The Asker:** When you are done with your questions, tell your partner what you learned. Pretend that you have to speak in your partner's place and talk about this area of need from their perspective. When you are done, ask, "Did I get it right?" and then listen if you are given any clarifications.
- **The Answerer:** Be patient. If your partner doesn't completely "get it," try expressing your thoughts in a different way. Tell a story. Remind them of a time in your relationship when it felt like this need was being met and let them know you'd like to work towards that again. If you've never felt satisfied in this area, then try to give examples of little changes that could begin to feel good. Try not to give the impression that you expect an all-or-nothing change.

Repeat! Take a week to work on this one area, then talk about another relationship need next week.