



# FOR THE LOVE OF LOVE



**SEVEN PRINCIPLES**  
FOR FOSTERING A  
HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP

**FOR  
THE  
LOVE  
OF  
LOVE**

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# Introduction

**D**o you want to cultivate healthy and thriving relationships?

Those who participate in healthy romantic relationships leave clues from which the rest of us can learn. These clues serve as key principles that can promote growth and understanding between both you and your partner. These clues help determine how to build a thriving relationship.

Learn about the qualities of a healthy relationship in order to incorporate them into your partnership.

**Cultivate a lasting and loving relationship with these principles:**

- **Chapter 1: Grow Together, Not Apart.**  
We will discuss the importance of new experiences and opportunities to get

to know each other. Celebrating the hobbies of your partner will help you learn more about them. Partaking in couples counseling will nourish growth and instill strength.

- **Chapter 2: Rules of Engagement.**

Disagreements come with every relationship, romantic or otherwise. Knowing how to handle these disagreements and how to work through them is crucial to navigating bouts of doubt and miscommunication.

- **Chapter 3: Four Paths to Intimacy.**

Intimacy is not just sexual. In fact, it is much more than that. There are different types of intimacy that all work to create closeness and authenticity in your relationship.

- **Chapter 4: Mixing Finances with**

**Romances.** Talking about money can be a source of stress and tension in a

relationship. However, these conversations are an important part of a healthy relationship. Knowing how to talk about and manage money together will lead to better understanding and teamwork.

- **Chapter 5: Catch Life's Curveballs.** Distress will rise and fall and come and go. Mental health issues get in the way, grief comes at unexpected times, or job loss affects the family. These hurdles present opportunities to be a source of strength and security for your partner.
- **Chapter 6: An Exciting Love in an Ordinary Life.** There are entire months that just fly by without much notice. Set regular reminders for yourself and for each other to check-in regularly.
- **Chapter 7: Interdependent, not Codependent.** You do not need to set aside your needs in order to meet the

needs of your partner. Foster an interdependent relationship by communicating, setting boundaries, and staying in touch with you as an individual.

# Chapter 1: Grow Together, Not Apart

Each time we experience something new, we grow, even if just a little bit. **Every interaction and every try at something new develops us into the people we will be tomorrow.** When a relationship has enough room for both of you to grow, it is more likely to invite positive growth.

**A secure and healthy relationship allows time and space to explore and learn new things together.** Being in a relationship does not mean you are tied down. In fact, it means that now you have a person to explore new things with. Your life does not get boring as soon as your relationship gets serious. In fact, that may be when it gets most exciting!

# Always Stay Dating

Comfortability in a relationship is wonderful and necessary. However, too much comfortability may prevent taking new risks and learning new things. You are comfortable together, at home on the couch. Why move?

Every person and every couple need time to unwind and relax. Equally important is the need to get out and try new things together.

**By going to new events, spending a day volunteering, or trying a new food, you're getting to know your partner in new ways.**

A night at home on the couch is a welcome relief in the middle of a busy month. Be careful not to spend every free moment in this fashion. While it's nice to have someone to do nothing with, it is also nice to spend time in a way that will develop your relationship in a meaningful way.

**The fact that you're in a committed relationship doesn't mean that you're no longer dating your partner.** Instead, you can keep the flame of newness alive by partaking in fun, adventurous, and romantic outings.

You can do this by planning to have a date each week. This date night is reserved for a new experience. Instead of going to the same restaurant you go to every time you go on a date, try a new restaurant with food neither of you have had. Or, go to a hiking destination that you've always wanted to check out.

**If every experience fosters individual growth, the new experiences you have as a couple will contribute to the positive growth of your relationship.** When you learn something new together, you're strengthening the bond of your relationship and getting to know your partner even better.

A date doesn't need to be expensive or fancy in order to be exciting and inspiring.

## Try these simple date ideas:

- **Go to a new outdoor location for a walk or a hike.** Getting outside and being mindful in nature together will offer an opportunity for each of you to connect in peace.
- **Try a new type of food.** Take time to get ready, the way you did during your first few dates together. Keep the phones away and keep your attention on each other.
- **Make art together.** Sign up for a painting class or go decorate ceramic pottery together. You could even get some craft supplies and have a date at home. Whether you like glitter, hot glue, or woodworking, getting creative together will open up the creative potential of your relationship.

- **Learn something new.** Check your local calendar for any interesting talks from intellectuals you're interested in, such as authors or motivational speakers. Choose a topic you each find interesting and see what there is to learn about it. Afterwards, discuss the event and learn something new about each other.
- **Get moving.** Spend time together in a way that gets you active. Take a ballroom dancing class or work out together. Perhaps you've always been curious about rock climbing. This will provide more than physical growth -- it will promote the growth of your relationship.

Doing new things invites new types of conversations, new people, and new memories. These activities will help your relationship grow stronger roots as you weather the storms of life.

# Share Each Other's Interests

You and your partner do a lot together.  
Perhaps you have *everything* in common.  
Maybe you have *nothing* in common.

**Regardless, you can *always* learn something new by paying attention to the things your partner cares about.**

One way you can grow together is by supporting each other in the things you are each passionate about. Whether the passion is scrapbooking or volunteering, dedicate a few hours to letting your partner take the wheel.

Spend a day asking questions and learning from your significant other. **Giving this specific attention shows your spouse that you're committed and supportive.**

Perhaps you're not at all interested in your partner's hobby. You don't have to fake interest. However, do your best to appreciate the things that are important to your significant other. After all, it is these small and mighty passions that make them who they are.

## Couples Counseling or Coaching

Couples counseling or coaching is a unique opportunity to understand how a relationship works and doesn't work. **Struggle isn't a prerequisite to working with a counselor or coach.** In fact, if you're not struggling, now is a great time to start with a professional.

**If both of you are willing, participating together will provide a system of accountability in your relationship.**

Attending a professional session as little as once per month will ensure that nothing falls through the cracks. Big problems typically begin as small problems. These small obstacles can be discussed in therapy before a major crisis occurs.

It can be difficult to see the big picture when you're one of the main subjects of the picture. A professional can provide a perspective that is non-judgmental and well-informed. In a healing space, you can learn to enjoy the good and grow through the negative.

Continuing to keep in touch with your counselor or coach before a crisis will make it much easier to reach out when a crisis does occur. Work done together in therapy will have a direct effect on the growth of your relationship. You're given an opportunity to learn how to be in relationship with one another.

This work will teach you lessons such as how to have fun, how to communicate, and even how to argue.

# Chapter 2:

## Rules of Engagement

Knowing that there will be obstacles can help you make decisions ahead of time.

You are in a loving and committed relationship. Healthy relationships are beautiful. **Healthy relationships are also allowed to struggle.** Healthy people are allowed to disagree and get frustrated with each other. You and your spouse can discuss how you want to behave before these situations occur.

## Inevitable Disagreements

When waters get choppy, it can be easy to jump ship. **Instead of getting defensive or**

**avoiding your partner for the day, explore what it's like to let down your pride and have a conversation.** The knee-jerk reaction is to put a wall up. This can be a hard habit to break, but it's worth trying.

Be more curious than stubborn, more loving than judgmental, more patient than prideful.

### **Use this process in your disagreements:**

1. **Agree on a time.** Approach your partner with the desired topic, and how soon you would like to talk about it. For example, you might say, "I'd like to talk about the dinner we had with your parents. Can we talk about it now?"
  - Give your partner the option to specify another reasonable time. When you're both prepared for the conversation,

you'll likely both feel safer.

2. **Check your body language.** Body language is crucial in arguments. Having healthy and non-threatening body language will de-escalate the situation, so you can focus on a solution.
  - Sit down.
  - Face each other.
  - Make eye contact.
  - Keep arms and legs uncrossed.
3. **Speak for yourself.** Instead of using “you-statements,” use “I-statements.” For example, instead of saying, “You completely ignored me at dinner,” you could say, “When you ignored me at dinner, I felt angry.”

4. **Stay Focused.** Focus on the situation at hand instead of on situations that occurred in the past. Perhaps your spouse has a relationship with their in-laws that frustrates you. Instead of bringing up every past example of behaviors you did not like, refer only to the occurrence that led to *this* conversation.

Think of you, your partner, and your relationship separately. When you face indecision, ask yourself three questions:

- What is best for you?
- What is best for your partner?
- What is best for your relationship?

You'll both show up to the difficult conversation ready, loving, prepared, and willing to talk things out. Discussing disagreements doesn't always mean that

they'll end with agreement. However, these conversations do invite compromise and understanding. They will even help you each get to know each other better.

## Remain Respectful

Arguing with intention creates an environment where it's safe to disagree and make mistakes. Saying something rude at dinner doesn't result in a three-month silent treatment. Instead, you can have an honest conversation about it that will help you and your partner grow in deeper understanding of each other.

If your partner does something that infuriates you, do your best to address the issue in private. **Insulting your spouse in front of a group of friends or strangers is more harmful than helpful.** It can be embarrassing for you and your partner and

can lead to a greater distance between the two of you until you can talk it out.

**Give your significant other the benefit of the doubt.** You know your partner. You know that they love and appreciate you. Perhaps they had a bad day, or you had a misunderstanding. Do your best to remember that your partner is a good person and is on your team.

When you approach disagreements with this in mind, you'll feel more inspired to work as a team toward a solution.

While arguing isn't fun or easy, doing it in a healthy way increases intimacy in a relationship.

# Chapter 3:

## Four Paths to Intimacy

Intimacy is a keystone in romantic relationships. Sexual intimacy is important. However, there are many types of intimacy and many ways to be intimate.

Sexual intimacy is important. Physical closeness and vulnerability can bring couples closer together. Humans are sexual beings. A significant other can provide feelings of safety in sexuality. **This safety paves the way for a deeper connection that echoes through the rest of the relationship.**

Intimate relationships are not solely comprised of sexual intimacy. In fact, there are four other types of intimacy that are equally important.

# Physical Intimacy

Physical intimacy occurs in friendships with friendly hugs and kisses on the cheek. An active sex life isn't a requirement for a strong and healthy relationship. There are other simple ways to show physical affection.

## **Consider these four ways to be physically intimate:**

1. **Go on a walk while holding hands.** Be mindful on a walk together. Hold hands and feel your partner's hand in yours. Notice the comforting feeling this connection brings.
2. **Hug for 30 seconds.** After the first 20 seconds of a hug, your brain starts secreting a feel-good brain chemical called oxytocin. This produces feelings of connection and love.

3. **Give each other a massage.** Set the timer for the just five minutes and give your significant other a small shoulder massage. This will help you connect physically in an intimate way that is also being of service to your spouse.
4. **Cuddle on the couch.** Put on a movie and find your favorite spot on the couch. Cozy up together, even if just your legs are touching.

## Emotional Intimacy

A secure relationship is one where both parties feel known, understood, and accepted. A great way to participate in a secure relationship is by being emotionally available for each other.

You can express your emotional availability both verbally and non-verbally. **Listening closely, validating, and summarizing what**

**your partner is saying will help develop emotional intimacy in your relationship.**

Sitting close and making eye contact will also increase emotional intimacy.

Being emotionally available means that you're willing to listen. It's easy to become emotionally unavailable because it takes such a conscious effort to be available. It requires giving our attention on purpose.

In order to promote more emotional intimacy, there are a few things you can do that will benefit the whole relationship. It all starts with you.

Begin by identifying your emotions. **When you can identify what you're feeling, you are better able to communicate and share those feelings.**

Once you're able to identify your emotions, you'll have a better sense of your emotional needs. **What do you need in order to feel**

**fulfilled in your daily life and in your relationship? How can your partner help?**

The ability to vocalize these needs takes practice, but the results are worth the effort.

## **Intellectual Intimacy**

Heart-to-heart, brain-to-brain. The foundation of intellectual intimacy is all in your head -- it's all about how you think and communicate.

Being intellectually intimate means sharing ideas and connecting on an intellectual level. These conversations take place on a higher plane than day-to-day conversations about other people or material things. Intellectual intimate conversations are about the things that really make you think.

What is the purpose of your life? What are the deepest life lessons you've learned?

Having these deeper conversations allows for the growth of intellectual intimacy.

Conversations that we avoid with the whole family at Thanksgiving might be the conversations we have every day at home with our partner. The safety that a healthy relationship provides allows a safe haven for the growth and development of opinions, ideas, and dreams.

There's nothing insignificant or too controversial to say in an intellectually intimate relationship.

### **Increase intellectual intimacy with these conversation starters:**

- **When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?** How did that dream change over time? What is your dream now?

- **What are your guiding political values?** What are your hopes for the future of our country?
- **How do you define your spirituality?** Is there a religious or spiritual tradition that is highly valuable to you?
- **What are your fears?** Is there a way you can help each other should these fears ever arise?

## Experiential Intimacy

Experiential intimacy means that **you experience things together, on purpose.** Schedule a day as frequently as every day and as infrequently as once every few months. Use this time to choose something to do together.

Perhaps choose something that doesn't require much talking. That way, you can each

get lost in the activity together. For example, if you need to do some remodeling, you could paint the living room together. Though you're not talking, you're creating something together. This fosters intimacy.

On a quiet rainy day, dump out the 5,000-piece puzzle and get to work. Focusing on this activity, with intermittent conversation, builds experiential intimacy.

The experiences that don't require talking really highlight the quality of the experience. However, experiential intimacy is increased with each new experience you face together, whether you're having conversations about it or not.

# Chapter 4:

## Mixing Finances with Romances

Money can be a very difficult thing to talk about in a relationship. Everyone comes from different socioeconomic backgrounds which dictate our attitudes about money. Some people have no problem spending \$100 at the grocery store, while others take a shopping trip like that very seriously.

There's nothing wrong with differing attitudes about money. Things get tense when we don't know how to talk about money or manage money together. When the time comes in your relationship to start talking about finances, do so mindfully and clearly.

# Having the Money Talk

**When talking about money, you must first agree to be honest.** This can be scary. Many people carry many different types of shame about spending or saving money. Some people are ashamed of their reckless spending habits while others are ashamed of how little money they have.

In a healthy and loving relationship, these conversations get easier with time. You don't need to come from the same financial background in order to have the ability to work together. All you need is honesty.

Establish that your relationship is at a place where you feel safe sharing your financial information. If you don't feel that you can trust your partner in this arena, perhaps there are some areas of growth in your relationship that you'll want to focus on before talking about money.

When you begin a conversation about finances, ensure both you and your partner understand where the conversation is going. It's easy to put up a defensive wall once money comes up. Lower this wall by making sure each person is comfortable in the moment.

## Managing Money Together

Finances are often a hindrance to romances, but they don't have to be. You and your significant other are a team on all fronts. In order to stay on the same page, manage your money together.

It might be easier to have one person take care of all of the finances. One person might pay the bills on the first of the month, while the other takes care of dinners out. This can be highly effective, as long as you are both still in communication about money.

Managing money together takes practice and constant communication.

## **Follow these tips to effectively manage your money together:**

1. **Determine your needs.** Sit down together and come up with a list of your top financial priorities. For example, some of your priorities might be your house, health, or retirement. Consider your needs as a couple *and* as individuals.
2. **Come up with a realistic budget.** What is your weekly budget? Write it down together and keep track of it together. You can use a budgeting app or share an online document.
3. **Set long-term goals.** What financial goals would you like to reach in the next year? The next five years? For

retirement?

4. **Share responsibility.** One person might be more skilled at financial details than the other. Nonetheless, it's important that both partners have some role in the financial aspect of the family.
  
5. **Have budget meetings.** Once you talk about money, talk about it again. Talk about it regularly. Hold recurring budget meetings in order to re-evaluate your goals, milestones, and needs.

**Money management is a key component to a healthy and communicative relationship.**

Having money conversations prepares couples for future honesty and communication.

# Chapter 5: Catch Life's Curveballs

There will always be curveballs and confusion. Such is the nature of life and being in a relationship is no exception. When your partner is going through a hardship, it can be difficult to know just what to do.

In order to better understand your partner and what they need, start by listening.

## Mental Health

Mental health affects booming numbers of the population. These obstacles can be debilitating and scary. It's difficult to know what to say to someone who's suffering from

depression, anxiety, PTSD, bipolar disorder, or any other mental health issue.

When your spouse is hurting, it can be hard to let go of control. There's no switch you or your partner can flip to make things all better. There's not a magic button that cures anxiety or a magic wand strong enough to wipe away trauma. Though this is unfortunate, it doesn't mean that the future is bleak. **There is always light.**

Because you cannot control your spouse's mental health patterns, you have a special opportunity to be a beacon of hope while your partner goes through a difficult time. Sometimes that just means sitting in silence, and sometimes it means talking all night long.

**Consider these ideas to help a partner in distress:**

- **Listen.** Give your partner the floor. **Whatever they need to say, let them say it.** Some mental health issues can be triggered by shame or transition. Let your partner talk their way to the root of the issue, even if you think you know better than they do.
- **Be patient.** You might find yourself having the same encouraging conversation multiple times. Perhaps you're reminding your spouse how loved they are, and they don't believe you. It can get frustrating to continuously repeat these conversations. However, your partner might need to hear it.
- **Support, don't solve.** Even though you want to, you cannot save or fix your partner. Instead, you can help them get professional help and be supportive and encouraging along the way. Remember, you're not solely responsible for the mental health of

your spouse.

- **Take care of yourself.** Though you may not struggle with mental illness, you may still be personally affected by it through your partner. Talking about this with a professional will make you stronger as an individual and a couple.
- **Get curious.** Do research about your partner's struggles. Their experience is unique to them, so do most of your learning from them. However, there's a lot you can learn about mental health by reading credible sources or talking to licensed professionals.

You have an opportunity to love your partner well by providing consistency and support in times of uncertainty and doubt.

## Dealing with Uncertainty

Maybe your partner is currently facing a period of instability as a result of the loss of a loved one, a change of career, a mid-life crisis, or another obstacle. Regardless of the catalyst, the ground is uneven, and you get to step in as a source of guidance and support.

**You play a major role in the support network of your spouse, as your spouse does for you.**

While you get to be your partner's number one fan, you don't have to be their savior. It's not easy to see the people we love in pain. These painful moments, however, are often huge growth milestones.

These milestones can lead to positive next steps when they're nurtured with care and attention. For example, if your spouse is grieving the loss of a childhood friend, you can provide a shoulder to cry on and a listening ear. You don't need to change the way your partner feels by distracting or avoiding the pain.

You can help your significant other cope with and feel all of the necessary emotions in order to get through and beyond the difficulty. Helping your partner do something does not mean doing it for them. You can provide guidance towards professional help and encouragement while they do their own work towards personal growth.

There will always be hurdles and confusion. The beautiful thing about a loving relationship is its ability to provide a consistent strand of hope through all of the inconsistencies of life.

# Chapter 6:

## An Exciting Love in an Ordinary Life

Life is beautiful and messy. Life is frustrating and freeing. There will always be change. Sometimes change can get us stuck into a routine that prevents newness. Some change even diminishes the free time that you once spent together as a couple.

Whether you're embarking on the new adventure of parenthood together or taking in your elderly parents, it's easy to let the new big things in life distract from your relationship.

**Despite competing priorities, it's important to avoid losing sight of what keeps it all going -- the strength and love of your relationship.**

In order to keep up with the daily needs of others, you must first keep up with the needs of your relationship. When is the last time you went on a date? When is the last time you had an hour of quiet, just the two of you? Ask yourself these questions regularly and maintain the work that got your relationship where it is today.

Relationships that stand the test of time still have work to do. It takes work to make it last and keep it new. As big life events come up, quality time and consistent communication will keep your relationship going strong.

## Frequently Check-In

Set reminders on your calendars to just check-in with each other. When there are children running around or many people to take care of, it can be easy to lose focus on

each other because you're so hyper-focused on everything else around you.

Schedule dates and stick to them. Take date night as seriously as a work appointment. Cancellations should not be taken lightly. Schedule a sitter or ask friends to help with other tasks, so you're able to take an evening off from your minute-to-minute responsibilities.

Making intentional time for each other will maintain love and happiness when life is full steam ahead.

## Maintain a Routine

Have a daily routine with your partner that includes enjoyable moments together. At the end of the day, you can share your daily highlights. Before bed, you can exchange genuine gratitude for one another. In the

morning, you can discuss what you're looking forward to that day.

Take a moment together, make eye contact, say, "How are you?" and keep the answer focused on your partner, instead of on others, on their job, or on the current TV series you're watching.

### **Simple things you can do to stay close each day:**

- **Go to bed at the same time each day.** By going to sleep at the same time, you'll both have time to discuss your days and unwind together.
- **Don't sweat the small stuff.** Address and let go of small issues as they arise and move on from days that don't serve your tomorrows.
- **Say, "I love you."** Take time each day to lock eyes and voice your

appreciation for each other. Take a moment and express your love for one another.

- **Laugh with each other.** Maintain your sense of humor by finding things to laugh about together in your daily life.
- **Give compliments and express appreciation.** Point out things that you like about your partner on a daily basis. Whether you like the way their eyes look with that shirt, or you appreciate that they did the dishes, take time to lift up your partner in small ways.

# Chapter 7:

## Interdependent, not Codependent

Falling into habits of codependency occur naturally and over time. Born out of a deep love for one another, it can seem natural to try to rescue, protect, and intervene on each other's lives. However, codependent relationships end up causing harm to all involved because they prevent individual growth.

Codependency is an out-of-balance behavior that keeps each person in the relationship from reaching their full potential. **A codependent person sets aside their needs in order to maintain the relationship.** This leads to disappointment, resentment, and unmet expectations.

Transitioning from a codependent relationship to an *interdependent* relationship creates a sustainable equilibrium in the relationship.

## What is an interdependent relationship?

While being independent seems like the alternative to codependent, it's actually another lack of balance. Depending only on yourself and not seeking support from your partner can create a divide in the relationship as the result of a lack of vulnerability.

By definition, an interdependent relationship is one where both parties are *mutually* dependent on each other. In an interdependent relationship, you and your significant other maintain your individuality while providing loving support.

## **Use these ideas to maintain an interdependent relationship:**

1. **Care about yourself.** When you authentically care about yourself, you'll find internal validation and joy. This will give you a security in your relationship that needn't be supplied from outside sources.
2. **Set and discuss boundaries.** These boundaries will keep your relationships from slipping towards codependency.
3. **Communicate with your partner.** An interdependent relationship invites honest and open communication.
4. **Listen.** Effective communication requires that you listen to and reasonably respond to your partner.
5. **Give each other space.** While sharing interests and experiences will help your relationship grow, so will pursuing

your interests independently of each other.

**Interdependence strikes a healthy balance in a relationship.** It fosters growth because neither partner is seen as in need of more help or intervention than another.

# The Finish Line

Enjoy your relationship to its fullest potential by embracing these healthy habits and implementing them in your daily romantic life.

A secure relationship allows room for growth. It gives you and your partner the space you need to reach the heights of healthy love for yourselves and for each other.

## **To recap what we've learned:**

1. **In the first chapter, we talked about how you can keep your relationship growing by experiencing new things together.** Consider what your favorite things to do together as a couple are. Expand on those things to have new experiences that will help you learn

new things as a couple.

- Exploring new areas of interest provides a platform on which you can grow in new directions as a couple. New learning opportunities lead to new conversations and stronger bonds.
- Take turns sharing hobbies with your partner. You can have fun together and understand more when you participate in each other's' hobbies.
- Begin couples counseling or coaching sooner rather than later. You don't have to struggle in order to qualify for professional help. In fact, going to counseling or coaching together before a crisis is a great way to remain stable when there is a crisis.

2. **In the second chapter, we learned that disagreements are a natural part of any healthy relationship.** Instead of putting up walls and avoiding confrontation, face the disagreements and work through the obstacles.
- Begin by agreeing on a time in which you are going to talk.
  - Pay attention to your body language. Not only does body language communicate your inner thoughts but being mindful of it can help to de-escalate tense situations. Relaxed body language helps the conversation to be more open and less defensive.
  - **Use “I-statements.”** Speak from your own perspective and experience instead of making assumptions about how your

partner is feeling or what their intentions were. Use statements like, “I feel...” instead of “You made me feel...”

3. **In the third chapter we discussed the fact that Intimacy provides a source of vulnerability and comfort.** While sexual intimacy is important and valuable, there are other types of intimacy that are paramount to closeness and togetherness.

- **Physical intimacy** entails physical closeness. Things like holding hands or cuddling on the couch provide an opportunity to spend intentional time together.
- **Emotional intimacy** means that each person in the relationship is emotionally available and supportive. **A secure relationship is one where both**

**parties feel known,  
understood, and accepted.**

Show your partner this understanding by listening to and validating their truth.

- **Intellectual intimacy** allows for a space where each partner feels comfortable sharing their truest dreams, deepest opinions, and most honest thoughts. You can dive into this intellectual intimacy by engaging in an interesting conversation and asking each other honest questions.
- Doing new things together creates an **experiential intimacy**. Working together on a unifying project is a great way to achieve experiential intimacy. Conversation and physical touch are not required. The only

requirement is curiosity and willingness.

4. **The fourth chapter was all about money.** It's not easy to dive into regular conversations about money. However, these conversations play a major role in the decisions you make as a couple. Enter these conversations mindfully and intentionally.

- **Managing money as a couple can be a daunting task, but it does not need to be.** Begin by determining your needs both as individuals and as a couple.
- Come up with a budget that is in-line with your long-term goals.
- Hold frequent budget meetings to check-in. That way, you can each take ownership of your

part in the finances of your family.

5. **Next, we discussed how life never promised to be predictable, and it certainly isn't.** Curveballs will be thrown in your direction and your partner will need extra support and encouragement. You can provide this encouragement by listening with care and compassion.
  - If your partner struggles through mental health issues, there are key things you can do to remain a source of support. For example, meet your partner where they are on any given day. Curing the distress is out of your control. **The best thing you can do is be a source of stability in a tumultuous time.**
  - There are other situations that life throws our way. Jobs are

lost, friends are grieved, and life throws a whole set of conundrums our way every day. These struggles are a part of life. They foster growth as a couple and as an individual.

- Whether you have young children or are taking care of your elderly parents, changes take place that lead to a difficult time keeping your attention on your relationship. One way to sustain focus on your relationship is by incorporating moments together into your daily routine.

**6. Chapter 6 was full of little actions you can do each day in your daily routines to help you stay close in your relationship.** Things like saying, “I love you,” and laughing together don’t take up much time, but they’re important.

**6. In Chapter 7, we learned that there is a happy medium between codependent and independent.**

Codependency occurs when one person in the relationship puts their needs aside in order to please their partner. Independence is on the other end of the spectrum.

- **Striking a balance means achieving an interdependent relationship.** This relationship is one where both parties preserve their own identity and space while relying on each other for healthy support and love.
- You can achieve interdependence by pursuing self-care and having open communication with your partner about your individual needs.

Cultivating a loving and healthy relationship takes consistent practice. After a significant amount of time in a relationship, attention and care is *still* essential, perhaps more than ever before.

Taking initiative to ensure the vitality of your relationship is the first positive step towards an even stronger foundation.