

## Framework for Cultivating the Relationship Blueprint

The following framework is intended to be a suggestion to help partners develop and cultivate a productive and healthy relationship.

The following prompts offer a series of discussions to discover and build out your relationship blueprint. Please note, the insights to the questions below take place over time and unfold as you both explore the different opportunities currently being experienced. The more you invest time in self-exploration (ME), as well as holding discussions together (WE), you will eventually begin to cultivate the environment you both are working for (US).

If you have any questions or would like a better explanation around any of the points included, please reach out to me.

Points to reflect upon/discuss and explore as you move forward:

- What is our focus? (***What are we working for...***)
  - Does it include understanding conflict in our relationship?
  - Does it include identifying how we create a "safe" place in our relationship?
  - Does it include understanding how we "play" together?
  - Does it include understanding our "roles" in our relationship?
- Mission statement (***How do we want to show up...***)
  - "We want to show up and be kind with one another..."
  - "We want to be present in our relationship..."
  - "We want to be curious and understanding when each partner needs support..."
- Opportunities (***What do each of us need to practice to cultivate our mission statement...***)
  - These are the actions and behaviors that each partner acknowledges they need to develop and cultivate their personal skills to contribute towards the "focus" and "mission statement" you've identified.
  - For example:
    - "I need to practice asking "how can I help" vs. walking away and avoiding your emotions
    - "I need to practice being patient and listening instead of giving advice when you come to me for support..."
- Communication (***What do we need to translate...***)
  - Each of us have different styles, patterns, beliefs, capabilities, wants, needs, trauma, safety, etc.
    - Communication with another person first involves understanding our "self."
      - What and who we are, how we operate, what we need, and what others need to understand about us.
    - The next step involves translating how that looks, feels, etc. to others.

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- **Process (*What are our guardrails...*)**
  - Each relationship should develop a practice of cultivating what is needed to create a "safe" environment to share/express (Communicate) what is going on when we want/need something.
  - Each conversation may have or require different "guardrails."
    - Therefore, it is important to always set-up a conversation with a reminder of what each partner needs, to feel safe in that moment, to discuss the subject matter.
- **Junk Food (*What patterns/habits do we need to cut out...*)**
  - Each person and each relationship have patterns/habits that do not contribute towards the "mission statement."
    - These can be physical, emotional, mental, spiritual habits/patterns that exacerbate challenges in the relationship.
  - The objective is not to stigmatize or exacerbate the behavior or make the other partner feel "bad." Rather, it's about being open to understanding what they are and how to navigate them when they inhibit the person or the relationship.
    - For example:
      - *If my "junk food" is to always look at my cell phone or check email when my partner is telling me something important and that action triggers them. Then, when my partner wants to talk to me, I need to put my phone down, focus on them, and be attentive to their needs.*
  - The Gottman Method identifies the Four Horsemen: *Contempt, Criticism, Defensiveness, and Stonewalling* as leading indicators of an unhealthy relationship. Minimizing the impact of the four horsemen is critical to cultivating a healthy dynamic between partners.
- **Conversations (*Our Ongoing Knots, Hot Spots, and Topics to Discuss...*)**
  - What are our "subjects" or "pain points" we want to talk about and explore and understand over time? These are discussions that are not usually completed in one conversation. Rather, these are different themes that can be discussed and explored as a relationship grows and develops together.
    - Wants & Needs...
    - Goals & Aspirations...
    - Family we come from...
    - Culture we come from...
    - Professional roles/aspirations...
    - Rocky Moments in our relationship...
    - Sensitive Subjects or Raw Spots for each of us or in our relationship...
    - Forgive/Repair past experiences...
    - Perpetual challenges we experience day-to-day...(Division of labor, parenting, finances, etc.)
    - Who I am...
    - Who we are...
    - Trauma from our past...