

## A Summary of the Levels of The Sound Relationship House

The first three levels of the Sound Relationship House (SRH) constitute friendship, the foundation of a strong relationship. The first level of the house is Love Maps. This entails how well you know one another—how well you know your partner’s inner psychological world, his or her worries, stresses, joys, and dreams.

The second level of the house is Fondness and Admiration, which is the antidote for contempt. This level focuses on the amount of affection and respect that resides within a relationship. Turn Toward Instead of Away

The third level is Turn Towards in everyday moments. The small moments of everyday life are actually the building blocks of a relationship. A partner may either turn toward, turn away, or turn against a bid from his or her partner. A bid is a gesture—verbal or nonverbal—for some sort of positive connection: conversation, humor, affection, or support. The very small everyday moments in a relationship are opportunities—opportunities for Turning Toward one another, opportunities that can build the Emotional Bank Account. The Positive Perspective The first three levels determine whether this level is positive or negative. This level represents what it feels like in the relationship. Whether it is positive or negative determines the presence of positive affect in problem-solving discussions and the success of repair attempts.

Manage Conflict We use the term “managing” conflict rather than “resolving” conflict because relationship conflict is natural and it has functional, positive aspects. For example, it helps us learn how to better love and understand our partners, deal with change, and renew courtship over time. We try to manage but not eliminate conflict.

A. Manage Conflict: Perpetual Problems Dr. Gottman’s research shows that most relational problems are perpetual because they are based in differences in personality styles, values, priorities, and patterns of behaving. Relationships will work to the extent you and your partner can learn to live with your perpetual problems. When a problem is a perpetual problem, instead of solving it, a couple needs to learn how to dialogue constructively about their differences. The masters of relationships seem to be able to come to some acceptance of their partner and his or her perspective on the problem and to dialog about it. However, if they cannot establish such a dialogue, the conflict may become gridlocked and gridlocked conflict eventually leads to emotional disengagement.

B. Manage Conflict: Solvable Problems for problems that are solvable problems, there are six skills for effective problem solving. These involve:

- Practicing Self-Soothing
- Using Softened Startup
- Repair and De-escalate,
- Listening to Your Partner's Underlying Feelings and Dreams
- Accepting Influence, and Compromise.

### Make Life Dreams Come True

A crucial aspect of any relationship is to create an atmosphere that encourages each person to talk honestly about his or her dreams, values, convictions, and aspirations and to find ways to honor at least some aspect of them. Create Shared Meaning Here, we come to the attic of the Sound Relationship House where our important dreams, narratives, myths, and metaphors about our relationship, and family find a home. Everyone is a philosopher trying to make sense out of this brief journey through life. Even four-year olds are asking "Will I die?" and then, "Why?" "Then why was I born?" This level of the Sound Relationship House is about creating shared meaning by talking about:

- Rituals of Connection (formal and informal)
- Shared goals
- Supporting each other's life roles
- Agreeing about basic symbols such as what a home means We believe that every committed relationship is a cross-cultural experience in which we blend together each partner's legacy, culture, values, and beliefs to create an entirely new culture. As a species, we are all meaning-makers and story-tellers.

### Trust

Trust occurs when you believe your partner has your best interest in mind and acts in ways that benefit you. It's knowing your partner values your interest and needs as much as their own. In other words, the belief that "my partner has my back and is there for me."

## Commitment

Commitment means believing (and acting on the belief) that this relationship is a lifelong journey, for better or for worse (meaning that if it gets worse you will both work to improve it). It involves cherishing one's partner's positive qualities and nurturing an attitude of gratitude about what one has with this person and comparing him or her favorably with real or imagined others, rather than trashing one's partner by magnifying his or her negative qualities and nurturing resentment by making unfavorable comparisons with real or imagined others.

In couple's counseling it will be important for the therapist to connect with each partner and for each to feel some sense of understanding and individual respect. Neither partner can feel they are the totality of the problem. Dr. Gottman speaks about how therapy can not be effective unless the three of you work to create an atmosphere of caring, respect, and admiration for each partner.

The Importance of the Therapeutic Alliance with Both Partners In this discussion, do not assume that couples necessarily wish to work with you. Pay very careful attention to the quality of the therapeutic alliance you have been able to form with each person. Dr. Gottman speaks about how therapy cannot be effective unless there is an atmosphere of caring, respect and admiration that the therapist develops for their clients. Only in a caring atmosphere can the couple have enough safety to dive into the work necessary to heal their relationship