

humantold

Date One of Gottman Eight Dates

John and Julie Gottman, psychologists and founders of the Gottman Love Lab, have been studying how to win at love for over forty years. After observing thousands of couples, they know the areas in a couple's life that cause the most struggle. Through these eight dates, they lead you through the essential conversations that will give you the best chance at a fulfilling and connected relationship.

Date 1: Trust and Commitment

Conversation Topic

What does trust and commitment look like in our relationship? How can we make each other feel safe? What are our agreements about trust and commitment?

Preparation

Define what trust and commitment mean to you. Think about what trust and commitment looked like in your family of origin. Name the little ways you and your partner show commitment to each other.

Suggestions

One partner can coordinate this date. You can decide who will be trusted to make the arrangements for this particular date or you can flip a coin. You can choose to surprise your partner with the location of this date, asking them to "trust you."

Location

Find an elevated location with a great view. This could be a tall building, a bridge, a hill, etc. Ideally there will be a bench or other comfortable spot where you and your partner can sit while talking through open-ended questions. If possible, make this first date location somewhere that is meaningful to your love story. Make it a beautiful or peaceful place. Wherever you decide to have this first date, make sure that whoever is making the plans picks a place that is private and quiet enough for you to have an honest conversation. This is a vulnerable topic and you want to feel safe enough to share openly.

At-Home Date: If you've decided to have this date at home, here is an idea: You can take turns being blindfolded while the other person guides you around the house. It's a great opportunity to practice clear communication ("you're about to go through a doorway," "take a step up here"), practice care for the partner being guided, and trust in the partner doing the guiding.

humantold

Troubleshooting

- Stay open minded to your partner.
- Avoid turning your conversation into blaming or making accusations about past breaches between you. Don't minimize fears.
- Ask your partner questions about why their beliefs about trust and commitment are important and meaningful to them.
- Be honest about your needs.
- Avoid trying to force your partner to believe what you believe when it comes to trust, loyalty, and commitment.
- See differences as opportunities to learn more about each other and create a shared value system for trust and commitment.
- Avoid criticizing or judging.

Open-Ended Questions for Your Date Conversation

Ask each other the following questions:

- How did your parents show their commitment to each other? How did they show a lack of commitment to each other? In your mind, what do these things in your family history mean for the two of us?
- What does trust mean to you?
- Can you describe a time where you didn't feel you trusted me, and what could I have done to fix the situation?
- What do you need from me in order for you to trust me even more?
- What do you need from me to show that I am committed to this relationship?
- What areas do you think we need to work on to build trust between us?
- How are we similar and how are we different when it comes to trust and commitment? How can we accept these differences?

Affirming Our Future Together

Take turns reading this affirmation out loud to each other. Maintain eye contact while reciting.

"I commit to choosing you each and every day and to show you that our relationship is a priority. I also commit to having seven more dates and conversations."

Adapted from: Eight Dates: Essential Conversations for a Lifetime of Love. By: John Gottman, Julie Schwartz Gottman, Doug Abrams, and Rachel Carlton Abrams