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Date Four 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.

Conversation Topic

How do we each bring value to the relationship? What is our history with work and money, and what does having enough money mean to each of us?

Preparation

Prior to the date, think of three things that you appreciate about your partner's paid and/or unpaid contribution to the wealth of the relationship or family. You will share these three things at the beginning of your date. Complete the "My Family History with Money" and "What Money Means to Me" questionnaires. Be prepared to discuss both.

Location

This date should cost nothing or as little as possible. If your income has increased in the time you've been in your relationship, do something similar to what you did when you had less money. If you choose to go to a restaurant, make it one that you love but also one where you feel financially comfortable ordering anything on the menu.

Suggestions

Consider going to a five-star hotel to sit in the lobby to have a conversation. You should go to any place that makes you feel comfortable, wealthy, or rich in some way, however, you define those things. Be creative. You can make yourselves a picnic and head to the park with a blanket.

At-Home Date: Discuss the questions over lunch at home with food from your favorite take-out restaurant. Dress thoughtfully. Use the good china. Pamper yourselves with at-home luxury.

Bring

You should bring the answers to the two exercises mentioned above, so you can compare and discuss. Be prepared to share your financial stories, your separate histories and values around work and money, and what they mean to you.

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Troubleshooting

- Remember that this topic isn't about budgeting or spending or anything to do with the numbers. It's about understanding what money means to each of you and committing to discussing money and work honestly.
- Refrain from judging your partner's values about money– there is no right or wrong way to think about or handle money.
- Never minimize the stress of your partner's work.
- When it comes to work in the home, be honest about what you do and don't do, and don't compare or measure your work against your partner's.
- Allow yourself to dream about money.
- Focus on all you have rather than what you don't have, don't focus on past money mistakes.
- When your partner shares their dream about money, don't disagree with them or dismiss their dreams. As with all dreams our partner shares, we need to listen, affirm, and ask questions when we don't understand.

Open-Ended Questions for Your Date Conversation

- Share three things you appreciate about your partner's contribution to the wealth of the relationship (paid or unpaid work).
- Discuss your answers from the two questionnaires.
- Discuss what you have that you are grateful for.
- How do you feel about work now?
- How do you imagine your work changing in the future?
- What is your biggest fear around money?
- On a scale of 1 to 10 (1=never and 10=always), how often do you think about money? How can I help you feel secure when you are worried about money?
- What are your hopes and dreams about money?

Affirming Our Future Together

Take turns reading this affirmation out loud to each other. Maintain eye contact while reciting.
"I commit to respecting your values around money and work, and working together toward a shared financial goal."

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