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Date Five 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.

The Date: Family

Conversation Topic

What does creating a family mean to each of us? Do we want children? How do we define family for our relationship?

Preparation

Reflect on what family means to you and what you would like family to look like in your relationship.

Location

A park or playground, an amusement park, or anywhere else children and families gather. Find a quiet spot where you can see the family activities but can still focus on each other and your conversation (and some parks and playgrounds don't allow you in them if you don't have a child with you). If you prefer to have a conversation over dinner out, choose a family-friendly restaurant.

Suggestions

Ideally, you'll have children and families in your line of vision during this date. It'll either serve as inspiration for the family you'd like to create with each other, or as inspiration to recommit to whatever birth control you have chosen.

At-Home Date: Each of you makes your favorite childhood dish—for example, tater tots, macaroni and cheese, or breakfast for dinner. Share a meal together and bring a photo of yourself as a child to share with your partner.

Bring

Your ideas about what kind of family you'd like to have, as well as your ideas for making your relationship a priority if you choose to have children.

Troubleshooting

- Stay open-minded to your partner's views about family.

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- Be honest about your desire to have children or not have children.
- Don't criticize your partner's family—whether it's in-laws or siblings or best friends who are considered family.
- If you already have children, appreciate your partner for their support as a coparent.
- Express your own values and needs from your partner in terms of family, and never criticize their values, needs, or parenting style if you have children.

Open-Ended Questions for Your Date Conversation

Ask each other the following questions:

1. What does your ideal family look like? Just us? Us and friends and relatives? If you want children, how many children would you like to have?
2. What are the ways in which your parents did or did not appear to maintain their closeness, love, and romance after having children?

For Couples Planning on Having Children:

1. What problems do you think we might have maintaining our intimacy in our future family?
2. What do you think you will love about being parents together?
3. What characteristics or qualities of mine would you like our child to have?

For Couples Not Planning on Having Children or Whose Children Are Grown:

1. How are we going to create a sense of family?
2. Who do you consider our closest family (this can be friends or relatives)? What do you want to do to deepen our relationship with our family or closest friends?

Affirming Our Future Together

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

"I commit to creating a loving family. If we do have children, I commit to avoiding destructive conflict and continuing to make our relationship a priority."

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