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Date Seven 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: Growth and Spirituality

Conversation Topic

How have we each grown and changed in the relationship? What does spirituality mean to each of us and how do we express it?

Preparation

Think about what growth, change, and spirituality mean in your life. If you haven't already, answer the "Shared Meaning" questionnaire and the "Shared Goals" questionnaire. Think about the rituals you have or wish you had in a relationship. Think about the ways in which you have transformed individually and think about the ways your own transformation has changed the relationship.

Location

For this date you'll go to a place that feels beautiful and sacred to both of you. It can be indoors or outdoors. It can be at your place of worship—outside of a temple, mosque, synagogue, or a church you attend. Think about having your date conversation at a local Zen center or other spiritual site near you.

Suggestion

The goal is to honor your partner in some way. One way is with a tribute. This could be done by a video celebration, or even a little representation of your love that you create in your home or yard. Start with a favorite photo of them. Collect a few objects that remind you of your partner and arrange them around the photo. Be thoughtful with what you collect. Let it be things that represent shared meaning between you.

At-Home Date: If you choose to create tributes for each other, have your date in front of these tributes. Begin with five minutes of silence. If you are experienced meditators, you can meditate. If you pray, begin with five minutes of prayer. Think of this date as sacred and meaningful.

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Bring

You should bring the questionnaires and the answer to the questions about rituals and goals. Be prepared to discuss with each other your answers to the True or False questions.

Troubleshooting

- Be humble and be curious about your partner's idea about what growth and spirituality look like for them.
- Keep an open mind and refrain from judging your partner.
- Ask questions before assuming you understand.
- If you feel threatened or frightened by what your partner is saying, let your partner know you're concerned rather than making the partner stop because you're afraid.
- Remember there is no right or wrong, and always put happiness and understanding above being right.

Open-Ended Questions for Your Date Conversation

After discussing and reviewing your exercises, ask each other the following questions:

- In your childhood, how did your family honor the sacred, or did they not, and how did that make you feel? Were they religious, and if so, how did they practice?
- What do you consider sacred? And why?
- What carries you through your most difficult times?
- How do you find a sense of peace in yourself? What is your source of peace?
- How have you changed in your spirituality or religious beliefs over the course of your life?
- How do you feel you have grown the most? In what areas?
- What decade did you grow the most in and how did you change?
- What spiritual beliefs do you want to pass on to our kids (if you have them or plan on having them)?
- How can I support you in your own personal journey?
- How do you feel about intentionally trying to evolve within yourself or doing things to develop in terms of your personal growth?

Affirming Our Future Together

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

I commit to growing and learning together and seeking shared meaning within our relationship. I also commit to creating three shared rituals for connection as listed below.

1. _____

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2. _____

3. _____

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