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Shared Meaning Questionnaire

Pair this exercise with Gottman Date 7. To get a sense of how well you and your partner create a sense of shared meaning in your lives together, answer the following True or False questions. If a question doesn't apply to you (a question involving family or children when you don't have children, or a question involving living together and you don't live together) simply skip it, modify it to your particular situation (dinnertime with just the two of you), or keep it in mind for future discussion.

Your Rituals of Connection

We see eye to eye about rituals for family dinnertime in our home.

T F

Holiday meals (like Thanksgiving, Christmas, Passover) are very special and happy times for us (or we both hate them).

T F

End-of-the-workday reunions in our home are generally special times.

T F

We see eye to eye about the role of TV in our home.

T F

Bedtime is generally a good time for being close.

T F

During the weekends we do things that we enjoy and value, both together and separately.

T F

We have similar intentions and desires about entertaining in our home (having friends over, parties, and so on).

T F

We both value, or both dislike, special celebrations (like birthdays, anniversaries, family reunions).

T F

When I get sick, I feel taken care of and loved by my partner.

T F

I really look forward to and enjoy our vacations and the travel we do together.

T F

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Spending our morning time together is special to us.

T F

When we do errands together, we generally have a good time.

T F

We have unique and specific ways of becoming renewed and refreshed together when we are burned out or fatigued.

T F

After answering the questions above, especially if you had very few “True” answers, please create your own rituals of connection by discussing the following questions.

- When we eat dinner together, how can we make our dinner time special for us? What is the meaning of dinnertime? What was dinnertime like in each of our families growing up?
- How should we part at the beginning of each day? What was this like in our families growing up? What should our reunions be like?
- What should getting ready for bed be like for us? What was it like in our families growing up? What do weekends mean for each of us? What were they like in our families growing up? How can we make them more meaningful?
- What were vacations like in our families growing up? How do we want our vacations to feel?
- Pick a special holiday. What is the true meaning of this holiday to us? How should it be celebrated this year? How was it celebrated in each of our families growing up?
- How do we each get refreshed and renewed? What makes these rituals meaningful for us?
- What rituals do we have when someone is sick? What was it like in our families growing up? What would we like it to be in our family?

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