

The Five Styles of Healthy Relationships

Adopted from Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work by John Gottman

1. Soften Your Startup

- Treat your spouse with the same respect you would offer company
- Remember: discussions end on the same note that they begin
- Practice relaxation techniques before you engage in conversation
- Start your sentences with “I feel...”

2. Learn to make and receive Repair Attempts

- Purpose is to de-escalate tensions
- When your partner announces a repair attempt, to try to accept it

3. Soothe yourself and each other

- Stop the discussion when you recognize physiological signs of emotional flooding
- Break for at least 20 minutes
- Relax yourself with deep breathing or progressive muscle relaxation
- Learn to soothe each other – if you frequently have the experience of being calmed by your spouse, you will stop seeing him or her as a trigger of stress and instead associate him or her with feelings of relaxation

4. Compromise

- Accept each other’s influence by hearing your partner’s opinions and desires
- Honestly and genuinely be open to *considering* your partner’s position
- Find common ground – work towards discovering aspects of the problem that you can compromise about

5. Be Tolerant of each other’s faults

- Let go of “if onlies”
- Remind yourself of the good qualities of your partner