

Divorce Proof Your Marriage

The Relationship Dynamics Scale

Please answer each of the following questions in terms of your relationship with your mate. These questions should be answered by yourself (not with your partner). The ranges on the back of this sheet can be used for your own reflection. Use the following 3- point scale to rate how often you and your partner experience the following:

1 = Almost Never, 2 = Once in A while, 3 = Frequently

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Little arguments escalate into ugly fights with accusations, criticisms, name-calling, or bringing up past hurts | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. My partner criticizes or belittles my opinions, feelings, or desires | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. My partner seems to view my words or actions more negatively than I mean them to be | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. When we have a problem to solve, it is like we are on opposite teams | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. I hold back from telling my partner what I really think and feel | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 6. I think seriously about what it would be like to date or marry someone else | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 7. I feel lonely in this relationship | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 8. When we argue, one of us withdraws ... that is, doesn't want to talk about it anymore; or leaves the scene | 1 | 2 | 3 |

Who to Withdraw More When There is an Argument?

___ Male ___ Female ___ Both Equally ___ Neither Tend To Withdraw

Adapted from Markman, H.J., Stanley, S.M. & Blumberg, Si. (1994) *Fighting for Your Marriage, Positive Steps For A Loving and Lasting Relationship* San Francisco, Jossey Bass, Inc.

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How Strong Is Your Marriage?

Stanley and Markman based these questions on fifteen years of research at the University of Denver. Their research examined the kinds of communication and conflict management patterns that predict if a relationship is headed for trouble. In a recent nationwide random phone survey using these questions the average score was 11 on this scale. Higher scores mean your relationship may be in greater danger unless changes are made.

8 to 12 - “Green Light”

If you scored in the 8-12 range, your relationship is probably in good or even great shape at this time. But we emphasize “at this time” because relationships don’t stand still. In the next 12 months, you’ll either have a stronger, happier relationship, or you could head in the other direction. Think about it this way; you are traveling along and have come to a green light. There is no need to stop, but it is probably a great time to work on making your relationship all it can be.

13 to 17 - “Yellow Light”

If you scored in the 13-17 range, it’s like you are coming to a “Yellow Light”. You need to be cautious. While you may be happy now in your relationship, your score reveals warning signs of patterns you don’t want to let get worse. You’ll want to be taking action to protect and improve what you have. Spending time to strengthen your relationship now could be the best thing you could do for your future together.

18 to 24 - “Red Light”

Finally, if you scored in the 18-24 range, it’s like approaching a red light. Stop, and think about where the two of you are headed. Your score indicates the presence of patterns that could put your relationship at significant risk. You may be heading for trouble—or already be there. But there is good news. You can stop and learn ways to improve your relationship now.

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To Summarize, There Are Two Key Risks

High Conflict:

- ❖ Proverbs 29:11, *“A fool gives full vent to anger, but the wise quietly holds it back.”* (NRSV)
- ❖ Proverbs 12: 18, *“Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”* (NIV)

Avoidance:

- ❖ Ephesians 4: 25-27, *“Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ‘In your anger do not sin’: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.”* (NIV)

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