

Exercise 1: The Gottman Island Survival Game

Imagine that your cruise ship just sank in the Caribbean and you awaken to find yourselves on a tropical desert island. The two of you are the only survivors. You have no idea where you are. A storm appears to be on the way. You decide that you need to prepare to survive on this island for some time and also to make sure you will be spotted by a rescue party. There are a lot of items from the ship on the beach that could help you, but you can only carry ten items.

STEP 1: Each of you writes down on a separate piece of paper what you consider to be the ten most important items to keep from the inventory list below. Then rank-order these items based on their importance to you. Give the most crucial item a 1, the next most important item a 2, and so on.

Ships Inventory:

- Two changes of clothing
- Ten gallons of water
- Matches
- Backpack
- Two tents
- Knife
- Sunblock lotion
- Long rope
- One change of clothing
- Flares
- Regional aerial maps
- Fifty packages of condoms
- Oxygen tanks
- AM-FM and short-wave radio receiver
- Pots and pans
- Shovel
- Toilet paper
- Two sleeping bags
- Small life raft, with sail
- Cookstove and lantern
- Two walkie-talkie sender-receiver units
- One fifth of whiskey
- Compass
- Gun with six bullets
- First-aid kit with penicillin
- Freeze-dried food for seven days

STEP 2: Share your list with your partner. Together come up with a consensus list of ten items. This means talking it over and working as a team to solve the problem. Both of you need to be influential in discussing your viewpoint and in making the final decisions.

STEP 3: Once you have compromised on a third list, it's time to evaluate how the game went. Think about how effective you were at influencing your partner and how effective they were at influencing you. Did either of you try to dominate the other, or were you competitive with each other? Ask yourself if you had fun. Did you work well as a team and both felt included or did you sulk, withdrawal, express irritability, and anger? Acknowledge any problem areas and agree to work together on these issues with your partner. Changing bad habits does not happen overnight, but you can move forward if you take responsibility for the part you play in marital troubles caused by issues of compromise.

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Accepting Influence Questionnaire

1. I am really interested in my partner's opinions on our basic issues. T F
2. I usually learn a lot from my partner even when we disagree. T F
3. I want my partner to feel that what he or she says really counts with me. T F
4. I generally want my partner to feel influential in this relationship. T F
5. I can listen to my partner, but only up to a point. T F
6. My partner has a lot of basic common sense. T F
7. I try to communicate respect even during our disagreements. T F
8. If I keep trying to convince my partner, I will eventually win out. T F
9. I don't reject my partner's opinions out of hand. T F
10. My partner is not rational enough to take seriously when we discuss our issues. T F
11. I believe in lots of give and take in our discussions. T F
12. I am very persuasive and usually can win arguments with my partner. T F
13. I feel I have an important say when we make decisions. T F
14. My partner usually has good ideas. T F
15. My partner is basically a great help as a problem solver. T F
16. I try to listen respectfully, even when I disagree. T F
17. My ideas for solutions are usually much better than my partner's. T F
18. I can usually find something to agree with in my partner's position. T F
19. My partner is usually too emotional. T F
20. I am the one who needs to make the major decisions in this relationship. T F

Scoring: Give yourself one point for each True answer, except for questions 5, 8, 10, 12, 17, 19, 20. Subtract one point for each True answer to questions 5, 8, 10, 12, 17, 19, 20.

6 or above: This is an area of strength in your relationship. You willingly share power with your partner, a hallmark of an emotionally intelligent relationship.

Below 6: Your relationship could stand some improvement in this

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