



# Relationship TUNEUP

Approximately 50 percent of all marriages in the United States end in divorce. Couples getting married oftentimes dismiss this alarming statistic, feeling confident in their relationship. In fact, co-habitation may increase a young married couple's confidence but decreases their chances of staying in a committed marriage. Is there a solution?

The majority of experts in the field of marriage say, "yes, counseling;" however, the problem with marital therapy for most is that they wait too long to go. If couples seek therapy too late, the chances of it helping them work through their issues diminishes. Currently, marriage therapists are encouraging premarital counseling and getting six-month checkups to avoid small problems from growing and becoming insurmountable.

A new study published in the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* promises hope for couples who are invested in creating a great marriage and are willing to sit down together and review their marriage. The study found that participating in

a performance review significantly improves marriage satisfaction, and promotes better intimacy as well as couple connection. Participants also suffered less symptoms of depression than couples who did not participate.

The performance review addresses several areas of a couple's relationship, and the couple rates each area from 1 to 5 with 5 being highly satisfactory and 1 being very dissatisfied. Here are a few performance review statements as a jumping-off point.

- We work well together and share the load.
- Our marriage is a high priority for both of us.
- We are good friends and support each other.
- We play together well.
- I have given you the physical affection that you need.
- I have been sensitive to your sexual needs.
- I have provided you with the emotional affirmation you need.
- I have listened well when you were telling me something that was important to you.
- When we disagreed on

something I was respectful of you and willingly engaged until we resolved the issue.

- I have consulted with you regarding major expenditures of money.
- I have done my fair share of housework this year.

If you take this review and set it up with a spirit of working together on your marriage, it can be insightful and helpful. However, remember you cannot criticize your partner in the evaluation. Here are my suggestions if you do decide to begin an annual performance review of your marriage.

## FILL OUT THE QUESTIONNAIRE THE SAME TIME EACH YEAR

Do it when you're together as a couple in a quiet, non-distracting environment. Don't get defensive,

but rather listen and be agreeable to making changes on your part.

As you tell your partner things you're unhappy with, be open and honest about the role you play. No one is an island in a relationship.

Celebrate after the review and understand that your healthy relationship is a work of progress and together you're both invested in making it the best you can.

The day you say "I do" you make incredible promises to your spouse with complete confidence that you'll be successful. However, years of sharing good and bad times can bring up issues you never considered going through with your partner. There is nothing more valuable than your relationship, and an annual performance review has the potential to help you increase your intimacy and marriage contentment. It's worthwhile making it a tradition in your marriage. ♡



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