

The Personal and Intimate Relationship Skills Workbook

**Self-Assessments, Exercises
& Educational Handouts**

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The Personal and Intimate Relationship Skills Workbook

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Using This Book *(For the professional)*

Being in an intimate relationship can be one of the most joyful experiences imaginable. Intimate relationships play a critical role in a person's overall health and wellness. An intimate relationship provides an antidote to the worries, tension, depression and the stress of our everyday lives. Something magical happens when two people connect with each other in an intimate way. Human beings have a universal need to belong and to connect which is satisfied when intimate relationships are formed. Intimate relationships can be the best – and most challenging – part of a person's existence.

Specific signs identified as indications of a healthy relationship

- Respect for each other's privacy
- Communicate in an open, honest and direct way
- Pride in each other's work, accomplishments and successes
- Time together is enjoyable and fun
- Sense of feeling safe with each other
- Trust in each other
- Faithfulness to each other
- Encouragement of each others' interests
- Appreciation of family and friends that are supportive to both partners
- Important matters discussed openly and freely - each has an equal say
- Allowing private space for each other
- Ease in talking to each other about feelings
- Willingness to prioritize each other
- Positive feelings about how one is treated and how each treats the other
- Support of each other's goals
- Acceptance of responsibility for actions
- Willingness to listen and to respect the right for each other
- Apologies sincerely offered when wrong
- Shared decision making
- Awareness of need for alone time
- Affectionate treatment of each other
- Arguments solved without hurting each other
- Respect for each other

Personal, intimate and healthy relationships are full of joy, fun, romance, intense feelings and mutual support. True intimacy requires that people develop empathy, or the ability to consider their partner's point of view. Intimate relationships grow with time, and interestingly enough, the more people get to know themselves, the more empathetic they become and the easier it becomes to develop healthy relationships. The goal of this workbook is to help each participant explore personal and partner behaviors. This workbook incorporates interesting and eye-opening assessments to encourage each reader to explore personal relationship behavior, as well as that of their partner.

(Continued)

Using This Book *(For the professional, continued)*

The Personal and Intimate Relationship Skills Workbook contains five separate sections to help participants learn more about themselves, and the skills that are fundamental to developing and maintaining healthy relationships. They will discover and better understand the importance of these skills in living in harmony with a relationship partner.

Sections of this book

- 1) PARTNER COMMUNICATION SKILLS SCALE** helps each individual explore the effectiveness of existing personal interactions.
- 2) PARTNER PERSONALITY SCALE** helps each individual better understand personal personality characteristics as compared to those of partner.
- 3) RELATIONSHIP NEEDS SCALE** helps each individual identify and explore personal dominant needs and the needs of a partner, and then help to determine their compatibility.
- 4) RELATIONSHIP INTIMACY SCALE** helps each individual examine the quality of the intimacy in the relationship with a partner.
- 5) RELATIONSHIP CONFLICTS SCALE** helps each individual identify the primary issues that cause the most conflict with a partner.

These sections serve as avenues for individual self-reflection, as well as for group experiences revolving around identified topics of importance. Each assessment includes directions for easy administration, scoring and interpretation. Each section includes exploratory activities, reflective journaling activities and educational handouts to help participants discover their habitual effective and ineffective relationship skills and provides instruction for enhancing their most critical partner relationship weaknesses.

The art of self-reflection goes back many centuries and is rooted in many of the world's greatest spiritual and philosophical traditions. Socrates, the ancient Greek philosopher, was known to walk the streets engaging the people he met in philosophical reflection and dialogue. He felt that this type of activity was so important in life that he went so far as to proclaim, "The unexamined life is not worth living!" The unexamined life is one in which the same routine is continually repeated without ever thinking about its meaning to one's life and how this life really could be lived. However, a structured reflection and examination of beliefs, assumptions, characteristics, and patterns can provide a better understanding, which can lead to a more satisfying life. A greater level of self-understanding about important life skills is often necessary to make positive, self-directed changes in the negative patterns that keep repeating. The assessments and exercises in this book can help promote this self-understanding. Through involvement in the in-depth activities, the participant claims ownership in the development of positive patterns.

(Continued)

Using This Book *(For the professional, continued)*

Journaling is an extremely powerful tool for enhancing self-discovery, learning, transcending traditional problems, breaking ineffective life habits, and promote healing from psychological traumas of the past. From a physical point of view, writing reduces stress and lowers muscle tension, blood pressure and heart rate levels.

Psychologically, writing reduces sadness, depression and general anxiety, and leads to a greater level of life satisfaction and optimism. Behaviorally, writing leads to enhanced social skills, emotional intelligence and creativity. It also leads to improved relationship skills, which leads to more self-confidence in personal and intimate relationships.

By combining reflective assessment and journaling, participants will be exposed to a powerful method of combining verbalizing and writing to reflect on and solve problems. Participants will become more aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their specific relationship and relationship-building skills.

Preparation for using the assessments and activities in this book is important. The authors suggest that prior to administering any of the assessments in this book, you complete them yourself. This will familiarize you with the format of the assessments, the scoring directions, the interpretation guides and the journaling activities. Although the assessments are designed to be self-administered, scored and interpreted, this familiarity will help prepare facilitators to answer questions about the assessments for participants.

Participants will be asked to respond based on their current relationship or any relationship from their past. The results will be most effective if they refer to the same relationship situation throughout the book.

The Assessments, Journaling Activities and Educational Handouts

The Assessments, Journaling Activities, and Educational Handouts in *The Personal and Intimate Relationship Skills Workbook* are reproducible and ready to be photocopied for participants' use. Assessments contained in this book focus on self-reported data and are similar to ones used by psychologists, counselors, therapists and marriage and family therapists. Accuracy and usefulness of the information provided is dependent on the truthful information that each participant provides through self-examination. By being honest, participants help themselves to learn about unproductive and ineffective relationship patterns, and to uncover information that might be keeping them from being as happy and/or as successful in relationships as they might be.

An assessment instrument can provide participants with valuable information about themselves; however, it cannot measure or identify everything about them. The purposes of the assessments are not to pigeon-hole certain characteristics, but rather to allow participants to explore all of their characteristics. This book contains self-assessments, not tests. Tests measure knowledge or whether something is right or wrong. For the assessments in this book, there are no right or wrong answers. These assessments ask for personal opinions or attitudes about a topic of importance in the participant's career and life.

When administering assessments in this workbook, remember that although the items are generically written so they will be applicable to a wide variety of people, the items will not account for every possible variable for every person. The assessments are not specifically tailored to one specific type of person. They are designed to help participants identify strengths in their personalities and positive behaviors that support and nurture personal and intimate relationships as well as to help participants identify possible negative themes in their lives and find ways to break the hold that these patterns and their effects have.

Advise the participants taking the assessments that they should not spend too much time trying to analyze the content of the questions; their initial response will most likely be true. Regardless of individual scores, encourage participants to talk about their findings and their feelings pertaining to what they have discovered about themselves. Talking about health, wellness, and overall well-being as it relates to jobs can enhance the life of participants. These wellness exercises can be used by group facilitators working with any populations who want to strengthen their overall wellness.

A particular score on any assessment does not guarantee a participant's level of relationship happiness. Use discretion when using any of the information or feedback provided in this workbook. The use of these assessments should not be substituted for consultation and/or counseling from a psychological or medical professional.

***Thanks to the following professionals whose input in this book
has been so valuable!***

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Jay Leutenberg

Kathy Liptak, Ed.D.
Eileen Regen, M.Ed., CJE

Layout of the Book

In this book:

- **Assessment Instruments** – Self-assessment inventories with scoring directions and interpretation materials. Group facilitators can choose one or more of the activities relevant to their participants.
- **Activity Handouts** – Practical questions and activities that prompt self-reflection and promote self-understanding. These questions and activities foster introspection and promote pro-social behaviors.
- **Journaling Activities** – Self-exploration activities and journaling exercises specific to each assessment to enhance self-discovery, learning and healing.
- **Educational Handouts** – Handouts designed to supplement instruction can be used individually or in groups. They can be distributed, converted into masters for overheads or transparencies, or written down on a board and discussed.

Who should use this program?

This book has been designed as a practical tool for helping professional therapists, counselors, marriage and family therapists, psychologists, teachers, group leaders, etc. Depending on the role of the professional using *The Personal and Intimate Relationship Skills Workbook* and the specific group's needs, these sections can be used individually, combined, or implemented as part of an integrated curriculum for a more comprehensive approach.

Why use self-assessments?

Self-assessments are important in teaching various life skills.

Participants will:

- Become aware of the primary motivators that guide behavior.
- Explore and learn to identify potentially harmful situations.
- Explore the effects of messages received in childhood.
- Gain insight that will guide behavioral change.
- Focus thinking on behavioral goals for change.
- Uncover resources they possess that can help to cope with problems and difficulties.
- Identify personal characteristics without judgment.
- Develop full awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses.

Because the assessments are presented in a straightforward and easy-to-use format, individuals can self-administer, score, and interpret each assessment independently.

Introduction for the Participant

Relationships are an important aspect of everyone's lives, but with today's fast-paced electronic society, maintaining healthy, personal and intimate relationships are becoming more difficult. Like most successful things in life, relationships need care and work. For most of us, learning how to develop and nurture our relationships was not included in our education. This book, *The Personal and Intimate Relationship Skills Workbook* is intended to teach you the skills to build and maintain effective and healthy, personal and intimate relationships.

The Personal and Intimate Relationship Skills Workbook will help you grow personally and in your relationships. Because relationships can be a great source of both joy and pain, you will learn the skills required to get the most joy from your relationships. You will be encouraged throughout the workbook to complete assessments, journaling activities and exercises. Because involvement and action are as essential as theories, it is important that you take the time to complete all of the skill-building exercises.

The Personal and Intimate Relationship Skills Workbook, is designed to help you learn more about yourself, identify the effective and ineffective aspects of your relationships, and find better ways to use these newfound skills to develop and maintain happy, healthy relationships.

You will be asked to answer questions based on your current relationships or on ones from the past. This workbook is unique because several of the assessments have included space for you to complete the items based on *your* perspective, and then a space for you to answer the questions based on how you view *your partner's* perspective. If you are not currently in a relationship, you can complete the items based on a past relationship. The results will be most effective if you refer to the same relationship throughout the book, whether past or present.

The Personal and Intimate Relationship Skills Workbook

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Messages

To communicate effectively, it is necessary that you send clear messages to your partner and that your messages are completely understood. Miscommunication is probably the cause of many of your arguments and fights. By learning some specific skills you can ensure that the arguments between you and your partner are kept to a minimum. To be more effective in verbal communication with your partner, consider these guidelines to make certain your message is heard and accepted by your partner.

- **When you communicate verbally with your partner, take responsibility for your messages.** Use words like I, me and my, to communicate your message. In this way you “own” the messages you send to your partner. When you use words like “they” or “some people,” you put the responsibility of what you are communicating onto someone else. Take responsibility for your own words. Using “you” often sounds threatening, aggressive and blaming, whereas creating I-messages conveys comments in the least threatening and overbearing manner.
- **Maintain eye contact and speak directly to your partner.** When asking questions, avoid dead-ended questions that require a yes-no answer (“Did you cook dinner like I asked?”). Instead, rely on open-ended questions that allow your partner the opportunity to express what happened (“What did you do this afternoon?”).
- **Express your feelings.** Examples of how to express your feelings include such statements as “I feel angry when you get home so late from work without calling me” or “I get frustrated when you refuse to pay attention to the children.” In the boxes on the left-hand side of the table, list the situations that frustrate you most about your partner. In the right-hand column, express your feelings to that person, using the guidelines you just read about.

Now You Try

Situations That Frustrate Me	What I Would Like to Say to My Partner
<i>Ex: My partner doesn't call me when coming home late.</i>	<i>Ex: I would appreciate a phone call if you will be late. Then I will not feel concerned or will not worry.</i>

Disagreeing and Arguing

Disagreements are not always unhealthy in a relationship, but they can lead to arguments. What do you and your partner tend to disagree about most? Disagreements often arise from not truly understanding what is going on in your partner's mind. When you find yourself beginning an argument with your partner, try to understand what is really happening and what you and your partner are really arguing about. In the left-hand column of the table that follows, list the things that trigger most of the arguments between you and your partner. Then, in the right-hand column, try to get to the bottom of the issues and see what is really triggering most of your fights.

Triggers for arguments	What we are really arguing about
<i>Ex: Going to a relative's home for dinner AGAIN!</i>	<i>Ex: We don't get to spend a lot of time with each other. We are concerned that if we tell them we want to spend alone-time, we will hurt their feelings.</i>



Assertiveness

Assertiveness is the ability to ask for what you need and want in your relationship. Assertive people are able to express their feelings, thoughts, desires, needs and wants calmly and directly to their partner in an honest manner. This takes practice. Complete the following statements.

Answer the following questions??

Why do you have a difficult time asking your partner what you need and want?

What happens when you do?

My Complaints or Dissatisfactions

Complaints or Dissatisfactions about my Partner	How My Partner Can Make me Happier
<i>Ex: My partner does not show love, pride or affection when we are anywhere but home. I don't feel loved or attractive when we're in public.</i>	<i>Ex: My partner can put an arm around me, touch me, look at me with pride and love, tell people of my accomplishments, etc.</i>

What I Want from My Partner

To assert yourself, you must know what you want from your partner and from your relationship with your partner. By establishing what it is that you really want, you will be able to ask for what you want and need without being afraid of angering your partner. You will be able to make decisions for yourself about what types of things you will need to feel assertive about. In the boxes on the right, list what you want from your partner in each of the categories in the left column.

Family	<i>Ex: I want my partner not to be upset when I want to spend an evening with my sister.</i>
Friends	
Finances	
Work	
Spirituality/Religion	
Children	
Household Duties	
Intimacy/Sex	
Social Activities	
Community	
Pets	
Other	
Other	



Non-Assertive Partner Situations

Identify those situations in which you need to be more assertive with your partner. By becoming more aware of those situations in which you are not assertive, you can practice your assertiveness training skills. For each of the situations listed below, describe how you show a lack of assertiveness.

Situations in which you might lack assertiveness	If you do lack assertiveness in this area, why aren't you assertive?
Saying "No" to your partner	<i>Ex: It hurts my partner's feelings and I don't want to do that.</i>
Asking my partner for favors	
Disagreeing with your partner's opinions	
Taking charge of a situation	
Social situations with your partner	
Asking for something you want from your partner	
Stating your opinion if it is different from your partner's opinion	
Asking for help from your partner	
Sexual situations with your partner	
Asking for time by yourself	