

## **Information Gathering Exercise for Couples**

This exercise helps couples to have a clearer understanding of each other's everyday lives. Even though a lot of this information is "in your head," it helps to write down some of the basics. Use the following form to interview each other as if you were reporters. (If your partner is unavailable, you can fill out this form without his or her input, but obviously the major benefits of this exercise come from sharing information.) Take turns as listener and speaker, and write out the answers on a separate piece of paper. Don't pass judgment on what your partner tells you and try not to give each other advice. Remember that you're simply on a fact-finding mission. Your goal is to listen and learn about your partner. Revisit this exercise if you (or your partner) believe that your understanding of one another is inadequate or, as is often the case, has fallen out of date.

1. The cast of characters in my partner's life
2. My partner's friends
3. My partner's potential friends
4. My partner's rivals, competitors, "enemies"
5. Recent important events in my partner's life
6. Upcoming events in my partner's life (what is my partner looking forward to or dreading?)
7. My partner's current stresses
8. My partner's current worries
9. My partner's hopes and aspirations (For self? For others?)
10. If my partner could do anything right now, what would he or she do?
11. What would my partner do if he or she suddenly came into 10 million dollars?
12. What are my partner's most important values and beliefs?

### **References**

Adapted from Gottman, John (1999) *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*. New York: Crown.

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