

Discovering Meaning in Relationship: Exercises and Strategies

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- I. Relationship Motivation
 - A. Basic theory
 - 1. biological/genetic level
 - 2. social/cultural
 - 3. meaning/spiritual
 - B. Maturation in relationship
 - C. What is meaningful?
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- II. Specific Exercises
 - A. Shared Journaling
 - B. Meaningful Activities
 - C. Meaning Mapping
 - D. Marital Mind meditation
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Questions for Thought

1. In what ways do the biological/genetic, social/cultural, and meaning/existential components impact your relationship? What examples of the three areas can you see in other marriages? What examples of the three areas can you see in your clients (individual or couples)?

2. How often do you experience spiritual love for your partner? What conditions allow you to experience this form of love? How can you create these conditions in your life more frequently? What conditions may need to be present for your clients?

3. What needs to happen for you to more consistently experience your partner as a unique human being – equal in value to you (not more valuable, nor less valuable)? How can you assist clients with understanding their partner's uniqueness?

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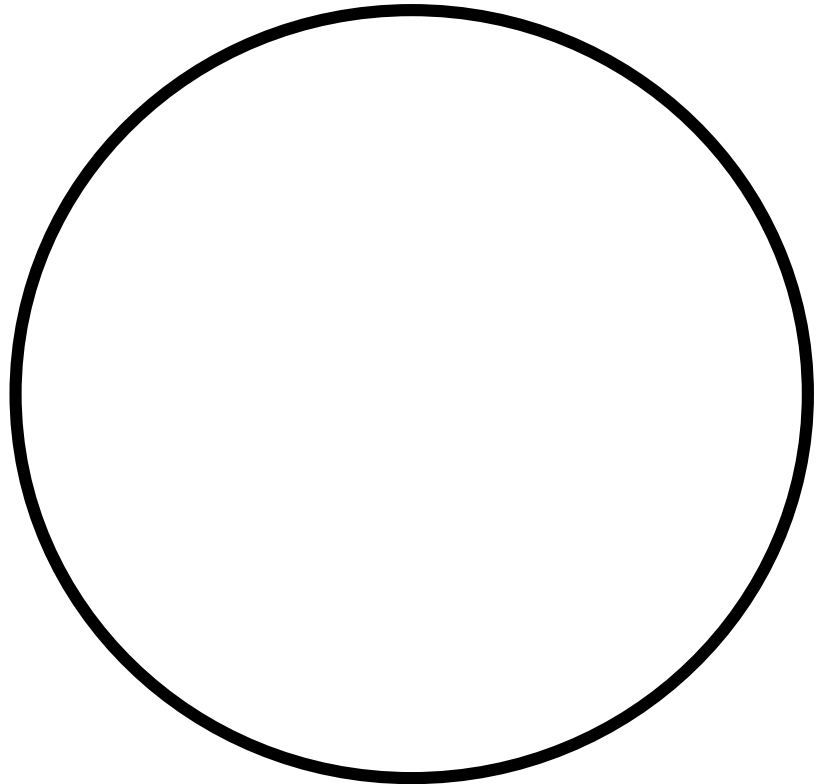
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Meaning Maps

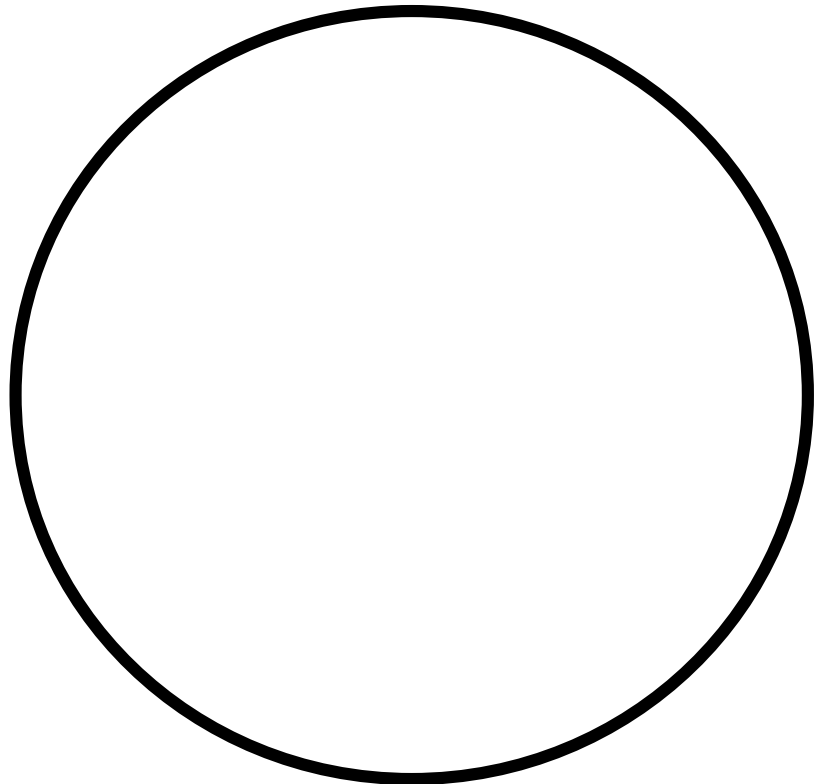
Current

The circle at the right represents the totality of your energy. Every day you spend energy in various ventures: work, relationships, etc. If your energy were a pie, how would you slice it? On the circle draw lines indicating how much energy you spend in various aspects of your life.



Ideal

Now, think of how you would ideally spend your energy. How would your life be most meaningful? In the second circle draw lines suggesting how you would *like* to spend your energy.



What will it take for you to move from your current energy expenditure to your ideal energy expenditure? Share your maps with your partner.

Marital Mind Meditation

Start by taking a few very deep and slow breaths. Your eyes may close naturally as you turn your attention to your inner experience. You may hold your partner's hand if you wish.

Notice yourself slowly sinking into the chair and notice that you feel more and more relaxed. Allow your attention to turn inward. Take a few more deep slow breaths.

Notice the feeling of your *self*, your consciousness, beginning to drift out of your body. Slowly you begin to move upward like a feather floating to the earth, but in reverse – gently floating upward. You are fully aware and your consciousness can see, hear, smell, touch and taste. As you look around from your new vantage point, you notice that your partner's consciousness has also begun to drift upward also. The higher you both drift the closer you get to each other. You both continue drifting higher and closer until your consciousness merges with your partner's. You feel peaceful, as peaceful as you have ever felt. You are aware of connecting with your partner in ways that you have never felt before.

Take a few moments to fully experience being cosmically merged with your partner and the powerful, positive feelings that you now experience. You have entered the “marital mind” – a place where you and your partner are not longer separate spiritually, but are the same. You are one. Your thinking and your perception change.

You no longer understand problems from your perspective, but from the perspective of the marital mind. From this perspective you can look down on the conflicts that you and your partner have. You have compassion for your partner and your own lower self. You recognize in this higher state of consciousness that any conflicts you have can be managed more efficiently and effectively when you enter the marital mind level of consciousness.

Take a few moments to review a conflict that you have had on a lower level of consciousness – imagine new ways you can work on the conflict that serve you, your partner and your relationship.

(Pause)

Now it is time to return to your usual state of consciousness. Take a last look around while you are still in the marital mind consciousness. You can return to this level of consciousness any time you want or need to come here. Now, slowly feel yourself floating down to earth, returning to your usual self. You will return to your usual consciousness remembering your marital mind experience and be fully awake, aware and relaxed.

When you are ready you can open your eyes.

