Love Maps Worksheet

Part 1. Our pasts

We take turns asking. The one who asks can guess the answer first, then listens, writes the answer in a few words and asks one follow-up question.

Item	Entry
Partner A	
Partner B	
Counselor or therapist	
Date	

Questions about our pasts

Include: each partner's answer in a few words, written by the partner who asked.

Question	Partner A's answer	Partner B's answer
Who were the most important people in your life growing up?		
Which family tradition from your childhood do you still value, and why?		
What is an achievement from before we met that you are proud of?		
What was a hard time in your life, and what helped you get through it?		

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Part 2. Our lives now

Questions about our lives now

Include: each partner's answer in a few words, and a question of our own in the last row.

Question	Partner A's answer	Partner B's answer
What is taking up most of your time and energy these days?		
Who comes up most in your thoughts these days, at work, in your family or among friends?		
What small thing makes an ordinary day better for you?		
What feels hardest for you right now, and what would help?		
A question of our own		

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Part 3. Our hopes for the future

Questions about our hopes

Include: each partner's answer in a few words, and a question of our own in the last row.

Question	Partner A's answer	Partner B's answer
Which plans or events in the coming months are you excited about?		
What would you like to learn or try in the next year?		
What is a hope for yourself that we have not talked about in a while?		
What worries you when you think about the next few years?		
A question of our own		

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Part 4. What we learned

What each of us learned

Include: each partner writes their own answers, addressed to the other partner.

What we learned	Partner A	Partner B
Something new I learned about you		
Something I want to ask you more about		
One thing I will do this week with what I learned		

How well we feel known

Partner A: how well does my partner know my world right now? Circle a number.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all										*Very well*

Partner B: how well does my partner know my world right now? Circle a number.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all										*Very well*

How we will keep our love maps up to date

Include: when we will ask each other new questions, such as on a weekly walk or at dinner, and when we will bring this worksheet back.

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Clinician guide: using the love maps worksheet

- **When it fits.** Love maps are each partner's knowledge of the other's psychological world, such as friends, current stresses, worries, hopes and dreams (Gottman, 1999). Gottman (1999) places them first among the three parts of the couple's friendship that form the base of the Sound Marital House, which the Gottmans now call the Sound Relationship House (Gottman & Gottman, 2017). Use the worksheet when daily life has crowded out curiosity about each other, or when a major change such as a first baby, a move or a new job is under way (Gottman & Silver, 1999).
- **Screen each partner first.** Interview each partner on their own during the assessment and ask about violence and about any ongoing affair. Gottman (1999) lists ongoing physical abuse and an ongoing affair as his criteria for when couples therapy is contraindicated. Use this worksheet with couples who have no ongoing violence and no ongoing affair.
- **Keep the tone light.** Partners take turns asking, and the one who asks can guess the answer first. In Gottman's first love maps exercise, partners answer questions about each other and correct each other's mistakes playfully (Gottman, 1999).
- **Follow the answers.** Invite one follow-up question after each answer, and slow down when an answer touches a worry or an old hurt. Gottman (1999) describes love maps as knowing the partner's world and also being known and feeling known, which the ratings in Part 4 ask about.
- **Plan home practice.** Ask the couple to use one or two questions a week at home and to bring the worksheet back. Couples with detailed love maps keep them up to date as each partner's life changes (Gottman & Silver, 1999).

Based on the descriptions of love maps in Gottman (1999) and Gottman and Silver (1999). The questions, layout and wording are original.

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Completed example: Maya and Daniel (a fictional couple)

Maya, 36, is a hospital nurse, and Daniel, 38, is a high school teacher. They have been married for eight years, have a son who is almost three, and came to couples therapy because they feel like roommates who talk mostly about schedules. They filled in this worksheet with their therapist, R.S., at their fourth session, on December 3, 2026, after each partner's individual assessment interview. Maya, Daniel, their therapist and every detail of the case are invented.

Part 1. Our pasts

Item	Entry
Partner A	Maya
Partner B	Daniel
Counselor or therapist	R.S., couples therapist
Date	December 3, 2026

Questions about our pasts

Question	Maya's answer	Daniel's answer
Who were the most important people in your life growing up?	My grandmother, who looked after me while my mom worked nights, and my swim coach in high school.	My older brother, Tom. He taught me to fix bikes and looked out for me. My dad traveled a lot for work.
Which family tradition from your childhood do you still value, and why?	Sunday dinner at my grandmother's. Everyone came, and it made me feel we belonged somewhere.	Camping every August. My dad was relaxed there, and we talked more than at home.
What is an achievement from before we met that you are proud of?	Finishing nursing school while working two jobs. I nearly quit in my second year.	Coaching the middle school robotics team to the state finals in my second year of teaching.
What was a hard time in your life, and what helped you get through it?	The year my grandmother died. Running every morning and my friend Lena helped.	Changing schools in ninth grade. The cross-country team helped, and so did Tom.

Part 2. Our lives now

Question	Maya's answer	Daniel's answer
What is taking up most of your time and energy these days?	Night shifts. I feel tired all the time and like I'm missing things at home.	Report cards, and my mom's health. I call her every evening.
Who comes up most in your thoughts these days, at work, in your family or among friends?	A new manager who changes the schedule at the last minute. And Lena, who just moved away.	My mom. Her memory is slipping, and Tom lives too far away to help much.

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Question	Maya's answer	Daniel's answer
What small thing makes an ordinary day better for you?	Coffee in the quiet before everyone wakes up.	When you text me a photo of our son during the day.
What feels hardest for you right now, and what would help?	Feeling like a guest in my own house after night shifts. One evening a week that is just ours would help.	Worrying about my mom on my own. It would help to talk about it without trying to fix it right away.
Our own question: What do you miss from before our son was born?	Sleeping in, and reading a whole book in one weekend.	Saturday morning bike rides.

Part 3. Our hopes for the future

Question	Maya's answer	Daniel's answer
Which plans or events in the coming months are you excited about?	Moving to day shifts in March.	Spring break, and taking our son camping for the first time.
What would you like to learn or try in the next year?	A pottery class. I've wanted to take one for years.	Running a half marathon with Tom.
What is a hope for yourself that we have not talked about in a while?	Going back to school to become a nurse practitioner.	Writing a short guide for new teachers.
What worries you when you think about the next few years?	That we keep living like roommates.	Caring for my mom and still having time for you and our son.
Our own question: How would you like to spend a free Saturday a year from now?	The farmers market, a nap and dinner with friends.	A bike ride in the morning, then pizza in the park with you and our son.

Part 4. What we learned

What we learned	Maya	Daniel
Something new I learned about you	How alone you feel with your mom's health.	How close you came to quitting nursing school, and how proud you are that you finished.
Something I want to ask you more about	What camping with your dad meant to you.	Your plan to become a nurse practitioner.
One thing I will do this week with what I learned	Ask about your mom on Sunday and just listen.	Make your coffee on Thursday morning and keep the house quiet for an hour.

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How well we feel known

Partner A (Maya): how well does my partner know my world right now? Circle a number.

0	1	2	3	**4**	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all										*Very well*

Partner B (Daniel): how well does my partner know my world right now? Circle a number.

0	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all										*Very well*

How we will keep our love maps up to date

Two new questions each on our Friday evening walk after daycare pickup. We will bring this worksheet back in two weeks.

R.S. asked Maya and Daniel to take turns and to keep the tone light. When Daniel said his mom's health was taking most of his energy, R.S. slowed down and invited Maya to ask one follow-up question, and Maya learned how alone Daniel felt with the worry. They agreed to ask each other two new questions on a Friday walk and to bring the worksheet back in two weeks.

References and further reading

Books for clinicians

Gottman, J. M. (1999). *The marriage clinic: A scientifically based marital therapy*. W. W. Norton. ISBN 978-0-393-70282-8.

Books for couples

Gottman, J. M., & Silver, N. (1999). *The seven principles for making marriage work*. Crown. ISBN 978-0-609-60104-4.

Gottman, J. M., & Silver, N. (2015). *The seven principles for making marriage work* (Rev. ed.). Harmony. ISBN 978-0-553-44771-2.

Research

Gottman, J., & Gottman, J. (2017). The natural principles of love. *Journal of Family Theory & Review, 9*(1), 7–26.

Shapiro, A. F., Gottman, J. M., & Carrère, S. (2000). The baby and the marriage: Identifying factors that buffer against decline in marital satisfaction after the first baby arrives. *Journal of Family Psychology, 14*(1), 59–70.

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