

Solvable or Perpetual Problems

(1) Below is a list of seventeen common causes of conflict in relationships and marriages. For each mark whether it is a perpetual problem, solvable problem or not a problem right now.

(2) If it is a problem check all the sub-areas that are troublesome.

1. We are becoming emotionally distant.

Perpetual Solvable Not A Problem Right Now

- We have difficulty just simply talking to each other.
- We are staying emotionally in touch with each other less.
- I feel taken for granted
- I feel my spouse doesn't know me right now.
- My spouse is (or I am) emotionally disengaged.
- We spend less time together.

Comments:

2. There is spillover of non-relational stress (such as job tension) into our relationship.

Perpetual Solvable Not A Problem Right Now

- We don't always help each other reduce daily stress
- We don't talk about these stresses together
- We don't talk about stress in a helpful manner.
- My spouse doesn't listen with understanding about my stresses and worries.
- My spouse takes job or other stresses out on me.
- My spouse takes job or other stresses out on the children or others.

Comments:

3. Our marriage is becoming nonromantic and passionless; the fire is dying.

Perpetual Solvable Not A Problem Right Now

- My partner has stopped being verbally affectionate.
- My partner expresses love or admiration less frequently
- We rarely touch each other.
- My partner (or I) have stopped feeling very romantic
- We rarely cuddle
- We have fewer tender or passionate moments.

Comments:

4. *This question is only for those who are already married.* We are having a problem in our sex life.
Perpetual Solvable Not A Problem Right Now

- Sex is less frequent
- I (or my spouse) get less satisfaction from sex.
- We have problems talking about sexual problems
- Each of us wants different things sexually
- Desire is less than it once was
- Our lovemaking feels less loving.

Comments:

5. Our relationship is not dealing well with an important change. (Name the change)
Perpetual Solvable Not A Problem Right Now

- We have different views on how to handle things.
- This even has led my partner to be very distant
- This event has made us both irritable
- This event has led to a lot of fighting
- I'm worried about how this will all turn out
- We are taking very different positions.

Comments

6. Our relationship is not handling well or I fear our relationship will not handle well the major issue of children.

Perpetual Solvable Not A Problem Right Now

- We have very different goals for our children
- We differ on how to discipline children
- We differ on what to discipline children for.
- We have issues on how to be close to children
- We are not talking about these problems (potential problems) well
- There is much tension and anger about these differences.

Comments

7. Our relationship is not handling well a major issue or even concerning (future) in-laws or another relative.

Perpetual Solvable Not A Problem Right Now

- I feel unaccepted by my partner's family.
- I sometimes wonder which family my partner is in.
- I feel unaccepted by my own family
- There is tension between us about what might happen
- The issue has generated a lot of irritability.
- I worry about how this will turn out.

Comments

8. One of us is flirtatious outside the relationship or may have had a recent affair, and/or there is jealousy.

Perpetual Solvable Not A Problem Right Now

- This area is the source of lot of hurt
- This is an area that creates insecurity
- I can't deal with the lies
- It is hard to reestablish trust
- There is a feeling of betrayal
- It's hard to know how to heal over this.

Comments

9. Unpleasant fights have occurred between us.

Perpetual Solvable Not A Problem Right Now

- There are more fights now.
- Fights seem to come out of nowhere
- Anger and irritability have crept into our marriage.
- We get into muddles where we are hurting each other.
- I don't feel very respected lately
- I feel criticized.

Comments

10. We have differences in our basic goals and values or desired lifestyle.

Perpetual Solvable Not A Problem Right Now

- Differences have arisen in life goals
- Differences have arisen about important beliefs
- Differences have arisen on leisure time interests
- We seem to want different things out of life.
- We are growing in different directions
- I don't much like who I am with my partner.

Comments

11. Very disturbing events (for example, violence, drugs, an affair) have occurred within our relationship.

Perpetual Solvable Not A Problem Right Now

- There has been physical violence between us
- There is a problem with alcohol or drugs.
- This is turning into a relationship I hadn't bargained for.
- Our relationship "contract" is changing
- I find some of what my partner wants upsetting or repulsive
- I am now feeling somewhat disappointed by this relationship

Comments

12. We are not working well as a team.

Perpetual Solvable Not A Problem Right Now

- We used to share more of the family's workload.
- We seem to be pulling in opposite directions
- My partner does not fairly share in housework or child care
- My partner is not carrying his or her weight financially
- I feel alone managing this family
- My spouse is not being very considerate

Comments

13. We are having trouble sharing power and influence.
Perpetual Solvable Not A Problem Right Now
- I don't feel influential in decisions we make
 - My partner has become more domineering
 - I have become more demanding
 - My partner has become passive.
 - My partner is "spacey", not a strong force in our relationship
 - I am starting to care a lot more about who is running things.
- Comment:

14. We are having trouble handling financial issues well.
Perpetual Solvable Not A Problem Right Now
- One of us doesn't bring in enough money
 - We have differences about how to spend money
 - We are stressed about finances
 - My partner is financially more interested in self than in us.
 - We are not united in managing our finances.
 - There is not enough financial planning.
- Comments

15. We are not having much fun together these days.
Perpetual Solvable Not A Problem Right Now
- We don't seem to have much time for fun
 - We try but don't seem to enjoy our times together very much.
 - We are too stressed for fun.
 - Work takes up all our time these days
 - Our interests are so different, there are no fun thing we like to do together.
 - We plan fun things to do, but they never happen.
- Comments:

16. We are not feeling close about spiritual issues these days.

Perpetual Solvable Not A Problem Right Now

- We do not share the same beliefs
- We do not agree about religious ideas and values
- We differ about the specific church, mosque or synagogue.
- We do not communicate well about spiritual issues.
- We have issues about spiritual growth and change.
- We have spiritual issues involving family and/or children.

Comments

17 We are having conflict(s) about being a part of and building a community together.

Perpetual Solvable Not A Problem Right Now

- We feel differently about being involved with friends and other people or groups
- We don't care to the same degree about the institutions that build community.
- We have different opinions about putting time into the institutions of community (political party, school, hospital, church, mosque, synagogue, agencies, etc.
- We disagree about doing projects or working for charity.
- We disagree about doing other good deeds for others.
- We have different views about whether to take a leadership role in service to our community.

Comments

(3) For each of the seventeen general areas that cause you problems, count up the number of specific bones of contention that you've checked. If you've checked more than two, then this is an area of significant conflict in your marriage.

Gottman, John and Nan Silver: **The Seven Principles For Making Marriage Work: A Practical Guide From the Country's Foremost Relationship Expert** (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999).