



COUPLE AND FAMILY MAPS

"In marrying another person, you are also marrying their family."

MAPPING YOUR RELATIONSHIP (see figure on next page)

In the computer report, there is a **Couple Map** which indicates how you each described your couple relationship and a **Family Map** which indicates how you each described your family of origin. These Maps are designed to help you better understand and discuss your couple relationship and families. The fact that families are so diverse can add to the challenge of merging individuals from two families into a couple relationship.

CLOSENESS: *Closeness refers to how emotionally connected you feel to your partner and family.* How do you balance separateness and togetherness? Indicators of closeness are I vs. We, loyalty, and independence vs. dependence. There are five levels of closeness. **Balanced levels** (3 central levels) of closeness are most healthy for couples and families, while the two **Unbalanced levels** (2 extreme ends) are more problematic.

FLEXIBILITY: *Flexibility refers to how open couples and families are to change.* How do you balance stability and change? Indicators of flexibility are leadership, relationship roles, discipline and rules. As with closeness, there are five levels of flexibility. **Balanced levels** (3 central levels) of flexibility are the most happy and healthy, while the two **Unbalanced levels** (2 extreme ends) are more problematic.

COUPLE DISCUSSION:

- Compare how you each described your couple relationship.
 - Compare your family of origin with your partner's family on closeness and flexibility.
 - Use the examples below to discuss the closeness and flexibility in your families of origin:
 - Family gatherings during a holiday
 - Celebrating a birthday or anniversary
 - Dinner time / Meal time
 - Handling discipline and parenting responsibilities
 - Closeness in your parents' marriage
 - Flexibility in your parents' marriage
 - Caring for a sick family member
 - Adjusting to a stressful change (e.g. a move, job transition).
- 1) How similar or different were your families in terms of closeness and flexibility?
 - 2) How might the similarities or differences impact your current relationship?
 - 3) What from your family of origin would you like to repeat in your couple relationship?
 - 4) What from your family would you not like to repeat in your couple relationship?
 - 5) How satisfied are you with the current level of closeness and flexibility in your couple relationship?
 - 6) Consider ways you might increase or decrease closeness and flexibility (see next section for ideas.)

Couple & Family Map



F L E X I B I L I T Y



CLOSURE

	CLOSURE				
	DISCONNECTED	SOMEWHAT CONNECTED	CONNECTED	VERY CONNECTED	OVERLY CONNECTED
OVERLY FLEXIBLE					
VERY FLEXIBLE					
FLEXIBLE					
SOMEWHAT FLEXIBLE					
INFLEXIBLE					
CLOSURE INDICATORS	BALANCED				
"I" vs. "We"	UNBALANCED Disconnected	Somewhat Connected to Very Connected			UNBALANCED Overly Connected
CLOSURE	Too Much (I) Separateness	Good I-We Balance			Too Much (We) Togetherness
LOYALTY	Little Closeness	Moderate to High Closeness			Too Much Closeness
INDEPENDENCE	Lack of Loyalty	Moderate to High Loyalty			Loyalty Demanded
	High Independence	Interdependent			High Dependency





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CLOSENESS EXERCISES - PRACTICAL TIPS TO BALANCE YOUR RELATIONSHIP

If you find yourself **“Disconnected”** or **“Somewhat Connected”**, try one or more of these ideas to become more connected:

- Fill in the blanks. Use the following prompts (or some of your own) to discover or rediscover your partner’s innermost feelings. “I feel happy when _____”; “I am afraid of _____”; “If I had more time, I would _____”; “One of my favorite books is _____”; “One thing I have never told anyone is _____”; “I get really embarrassed when _____”; “My favorite meal is _____”;
- Say “No” to outside activities that take too much time and energy away from your relationship.
- Participate in community service or volunteering projects together.
- Start having a weekly “date” night.
- Plan and dream together. Create a list of things you would like to do in your life and share your list with your partner.
- Take a class or vacation together.
- Find a hobby or activity you can share with one another.
- Compliment your partner.

If you find yourself **“Overly Connected”** or **“Very Connected”**, try one or more of these ideas to build your independence:

- Maintain, create and nurture friendships with others.
- Take a class alone or with friends.
- Volunteer for something your partner is not involved with.
- Give yourself some alone time walking, jogging, or journaling. Get to know and like yourself. When your tank is full, you’ll have more to share with your partner later.



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FLEXIBILITY EXERCISES - PRACTICAL TIPS TO BALANCE YOUR RELATIONSHIP

If you find yourself **“Inflexible”** or **“Somewhat Flexible”**, try one or more of these ideas to become more flexible:

- **Share leadership and roles.** If you and your partner have strictly defined roles and leadership patterns, try changing the normal routine.
- **Put away your lists, calendars, and schedules for a day.** Experience the day together without looking at a watch or clock.
- **Brainstorm a list of your roles, and expectations for your relationship.** Revise this list in a way that increases flexibility.
- **Switch roles with your partner for a week.** If your partner normally does the grocery shopping, make this your job for the week while your partner takes over one of your jobs.
- **Do something really spontaneous.** Clear your schedule for a day or week and use the time to meet your partner for a romantic getaway.

If you find yourself **“Overly Flexible”** or **“Very Flexible”**, try one or more of these ideas to add more stability:

- **Add more consistency, tradition and rituals.** Research has found rituals and routines are associated with higher marital satisfaction and stronger family relationships. Rituals create strong bonds and build loving relationships and are organizers of family life. Rituals are more than holidays and rites of passage—daily routines are also very important rituals for couples and families. Daily rituals include mealtime rituals, wake up and bedtime rituals, and everyday greetings and goodbyes.
- **Make a list of household tasks and who will do them.** Negotiate these with your partner.
- **Add more consistency to your parenting.**
- **Keep promises you made to your partner.**