

201 Relationship Questions

The Couples Guide to Building Trust and Emotional Intimacy

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How to Use These Questions

Make this a project you and your partner undertake as a team. You both want to enter this work with the specific intention of strengthening and protecting your relationship, in addition to building intimacy and learning more about each other. These questions can be fun, humorous, and lightning, and deeply moving. You'll be surprised at how much more you discover about yourself and about each other

You also will be challenged to make some personal changes in your behaviors, habits, and words. The questions will reveal unmet needs and behavior change requests from both of you. You will want to discuss these needs and requests and what you are each willing to change or accommodate for the other. There might be needs you can't fulfill or changes you're unwilling to make, and this will require honest and open discussion, so you can mutually arrive at alternative solutions.

There are 20 questions and topics in the book, each with 10 or more related questions and question prompts. Consider working through the topics during the next 20 days, asking each other the questions from one topic per day. You can follow the order the topics are presented, or choose the topic that feels most relevant to what's going on in your relationship at the time. If there are section topics that don't apply to you (for example, the section on parenting wouldn't apply if you don't have children), then feel free to skip over it. However, you still might find of the questions and your partner's answers interesting and enlightening.

Both of you should keep a journal to make notes about your partners responses and your own feelings after you complete the questions. You will also want to write down specific action steps both of you will take if a question prompts an adjustment in attitude, behavior, communication, or values.

When you begin a topic, you will each ask and answer the same question, taking turns as the first person to answer a question. It's often more difficult to be the first one to answer, as you might need time for your true feelings to bubble to the surface or you might feel reticent to be fully open in your response. Also your partners answers can influence your responses, so be mindful that your answers reflect your own true feelings and needs.

Your partners answers or your own reactions might stimulate more questions or conversation between you, which can further develop connection and intimacy. Just be sure you listen intently to your partners responses without interrupting or getting distracted. Sit close together as you are asking and answering, holding hands or touching. Even if your partner's answers makes you bristle or feel uncomfortable, try hard to simply listen without anger or judgment. Invite your partner to dig deeper and share more by asking, "Is there more?" once he or she answers the question. Keep asking this until your partner has nothing left to add.

Should a question provoke tension, pain, or anger between the two of you, trying to ferret out the emotion behind the negative feelings. Ask your partner directly, "What is the emotion underneath your irritation? What was it about my response that made you feel upset?" In answering this, be careful not to project to blame or criticism on your partner, even if you feel he or she is at fault. Speak about your inner feelings, which requires being vulnerable rather than defensive. You might say something like, "When you tell me you need more attention from me, it makes me feel like I am not good enough and

unappreciated for my efforts.” When we acknowledge and understand the emotions behind our partners anger or pain, it allows us to be more compassionate and willing to find workable solutions.

Should any of your discussions around these questions become too emotional or difficult to sort through without pain or anger, please seek the support of a trained relationship counselor to help you navigate the issue. Sometimes old wounds and pain from the past are too entrenched to unravel and heal without the help of a therapist. If this is the case, don't allow this emotional division to languish between you. Put your relationship first by seeking to treat and heal any fissures that could ultimately pull you apart or undermine the happiness of your connection.

One final note: I believe the physical environment in which you ask and answer these questions make a big difference in how you respond and connect with each other. Don't undertake this important relationship work while kids are underfoot, dinner is cooking, or the TV is playing in the background. Choose a time when you know you won't be interrupted , perhaps early in the morning before anyone else awakens or in the evening during quiet time.

Find a room in your home that feels peaceful and uncluttered without potential distractions or interruptions. Allow yourself an hour to finish all ten questions from one section and to discuss your feelings and reactions. Inform anyone else who lives in the house not to interrupt you during this hour. If necessary, leave the house to go to a quiet restaurant, sit somewhere in nature, or park the car somewhere in a peaceful setting. Consider this sacred time together that not only contributes to your happiness as a couple, but also make you better parents, friends, and professionals. Your relationship happiness is the linchpin for happiness in all other areas in your life.

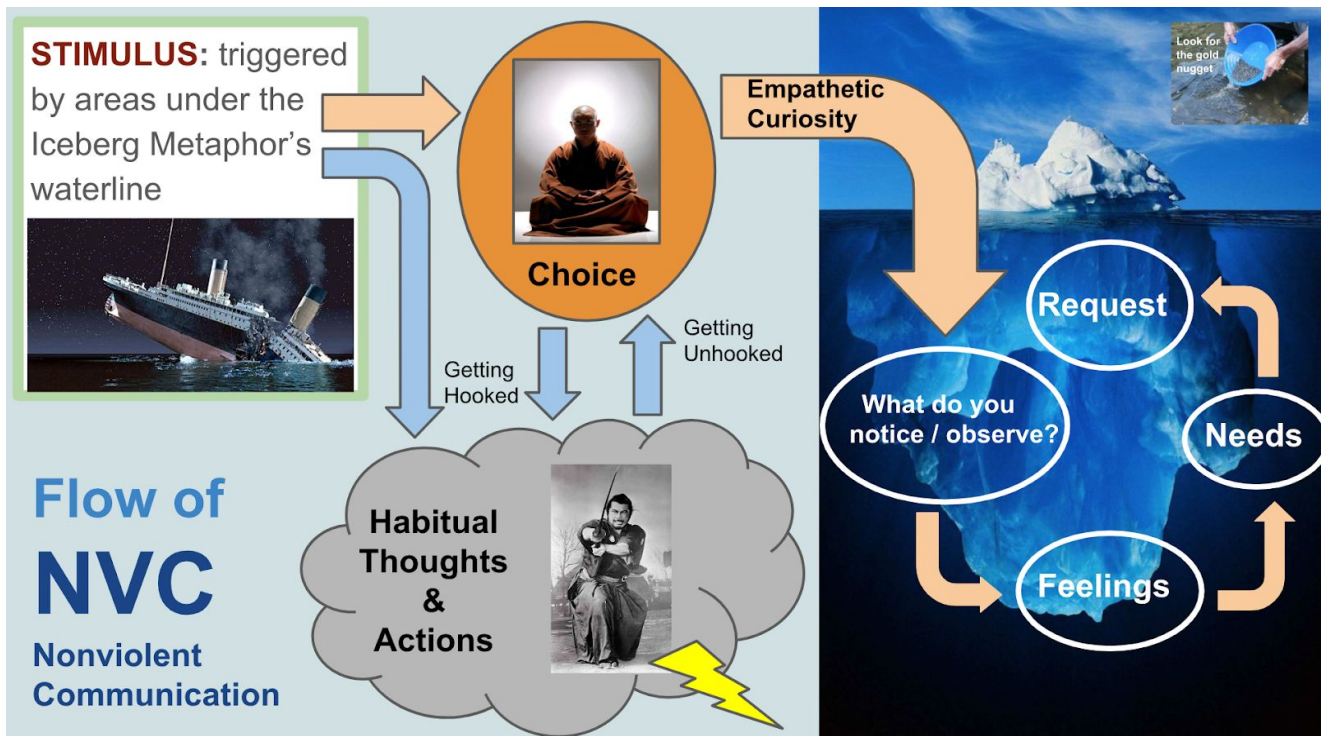
So, are you ready to get started?

Here are a few reminders:

- Grab your journals, and get a glass of water or a cup of tea (try to avoid alcohol as it alters your verbal self-control).
- Find your peaceful spot in the house or elsewhere.
- Flip a coin to see who will be the first one to answer the first question. Then alternate after that. Read the question out loud. Then ask the question directly to your partner.
- Try not to read ahead to the next questions, but instead focus intently on the question you are asking and answering.
- Sit close to each other so you can touch and look at each other face to face.
- Give each other plenty of time to respond, and as you are listening to your partner answer a question, try not to think ahead about your own answers. Just be fully present for your partner and practice empathetic listening skills.

At the end of each section, there is a follow-up prompt inviting you to make behavior change requests of your partner. If your partner reveals a request for a change from you, discuss and write down

specific action steps you both intend to take and when you intend to take them. Making these changes can take time, as we need repetition and reinforcement to solidify new behaviors. Set up a system of gentle reminders and accountability for each other, and be patient as you both strive to be a better, more attentive, loving partner for each other.



How You Can Use the NVC Process



Clearly expressing
how **I am**
without blaming
or criticizing

Empathically receiving
how **you are**
without hearing
blame or criticism

OBSERVATIONS

1. What I observe (*see, hear, remember, imagine, free from my evaluations*) that does or does not contribute to my well-being:
“When I (see, hear) . . . ”

1. What you observe (*see, hear, remember, imagine, free from your evaluations*) that does or does not contribute to your well-being:
“When you see/hear . . . ”
(Sometimes unspoken when offering empathy)

FEELINGS

2. How I feel (*emotion or sensation rather than thought*) in relation to what I observe:
“I feel . . . ”

2. How you feel (*emotion or sensation rather than thought*) in relation to what you observe:
“You feel . . . ”

NEEDS

3. What I need or value (*rather than a preference, or a specific action*) that causes my feelings:
“. . . because I need/value . . . ”

3. What you need or value (*rather than a preference, or a specific action*) that causes your feelings:
“. . . because you need/value . . . ”

Clearly requesting that
which would enrich **my**
life without demanding

Empathically receiving that
which would enrich **your** life
without hearing any demand

REQUESTS

4. The concrete actions I would like taken:
“Would you be willing to . . . ?”

4. The concrete actions you would like taken:
“Would you like . . . ?”
(Sometimes unspoken when offering empathy)



Section 1: Feeling Loved

1. What specific behaviors and action from me feel most loving to you?
2. How would you like me to verbally express my love?
3. What kind of physical touch feels the most loving?
4. What makes you feel more loving toward me?
5. How can I ask for more love from you?
6. What might I say or do that would feel unloving to you?
7. How will I know when you need more love from me?
8. How often do you need to hear me say, "I love you"?
9. What does unconditional love mean to you?
10. How can we rekindle love when we see signs of apathy or distance?

Follow-up: Are there any behavior adjustments you'd like to request from your partner related to feeling loved? What specific action steps will you both take to help your partner feel more loved? Write these down and determine how and when you will initiate these changes and actions.

Section 2: Respect and Kindness

1. What specific actions and words make you feel respected?
2. How have you been disrespected in the past, and how did it make you feel?
3. Am I doing anything now to make you feel disrespected?
4. Are there any ways in which you feel undeserving of respect?
5. How can I support you in feeling more respected in this area?
6. What acts of kindness from me mean the most to you?
7. How have I unknowingly been less than kind to you?
8. How should I let you know that I feel you're being unkind?
9. Do you see me as a kind person to you and others?
10. What acts of kindness or service could we perform together that would strengthen our relationship?

Follow-up: Are there any behavior adjustments you'd like to request from your partner related to respect and kindness? What specific action steps will you both take to help your partner feel more respect and kindness? Write these down and determine how and when you will initiate these changes or actions.

Section 3: Communication

1. How can we have more intimate conversations?
2. What should I do if I need you to talk more to me?
3. How can I let you know I don't feel like talking?
4. How can I best communicate a problem or concern?
5. Is there anything about my tone of voice that bothers you?
6. What topics should we only discuss in person (not by text, email, or phone)?
7. Do you feel completely free to talk with me about anything?
8. Am I free to talk with you about anything?
9. What topics do you most enjoy discussing with me?
10. How can I listen to you better so you feel completely heard?

Follow-up: Are there any behavior adjustments you'd like to request from your partner related to communication? What specific action steps will you both take to help you both communicate better? Write these down and determine how and when you will initiate these changes or actions.

Section 4: Emotional Needs

1. What are your primary emotional needs?
2. Am I responsive enough to your emotional needs?
3. What should I say to you when I need more from you emotionally?
4. Do I give you more emotional space?
5. What could I do to make you feel more understood?
6. Do you feel free to express your emotions with me?
7. Do you have any negative emotions about our relationship you need to express?
8. What from your past has shaped your emotional needs and reactions?
9. Would you consider yourself a highly sensitive person, and if so, how can I support you?
10. What other ways do you have for dealing with your emotions if I feel overwhelmed by them?

Follow-up: Are there any behavior adjustments you'd like to request from your partner related to emotional needs? What specific action steps will you both take to help you get your emotional needs met and to better understand the emotions of the other? Write these down and determine how and when you will initiate these changes or actions.

Section 5: Personal Boundaries

1. What should I never say to you in anger or playfulness?
2. Have you shared all your personal boundaries with me? If not, what are they?
3. Is there anything I do now that crosses your boundaries and makes you uncomfortable?
4. In what ways do you see me as a unique individual, separate and apart from our relationship?
5. Do you feel free to be yourself and express yourself with me? If not, why?
6. Is there anything about our sexual intimacy that makes you unhappy or uncomfortable? If so, what?
7. Are there any physical possessions or spaces in our home that you'd like to have as your own?
8. Do you ever feel uncomfortable saying "no" or speaking up for yourself with me? If so, why?
9. Where are you unwilling to compromise?
10. How should we handle it, if a boundary has been crossed?

Follow-up: Are there any behavior adjustments you'd like to request from your partner related to your personal boundaries? What specific action steps will you both take to help establish and honor boundaries? Write these down and determine how and when you will initiate these changes or actions.

Section 6: Sex and Affection

1. How often would you like to have sex?
2. What sexual fantasies do you have that we can enjoy together?
3. How can we improve our sex life?
4. Do you feel comfortable talking with me about your sexual needs? If not, why?
5. How much foreplay before sex is important to you?
6. How can I make you feel more desirable and sexy?
7. How much non-sexual affection would you like?
8. What kind of affection feels loving and good to you?
9. How much affection in public are you comfortable with?
10. When do you need affection the most?

Follow-up: Are there any behavior adjustments you'd like to request from your partner related to your sex life? What specific action steps will you both take to help enhance your sex life? Write these down and determine how and when you will initiate these changes or actions.

Section 7: Emotional Intimacy

1. What activities and interests can we develop that will bring us closer?
2. What could I do that would cause you to pull away from me?
3. Who do we know that has the kind of intimacy we want?
4. When do you feel the most connected to me?
5. What are the life lessons I can learn from you?
6. What kind of memories do we want to create together?
7. What will be the early warning signs that our relationship is in trouble?
8. What do you think makes our relationship special?
9. What are your deepest dreams and desires for yourself and for us?
10. What should we do if we start to lose our emotional closeness?

Follow-up: Are there any behavior adjustments you'd like to request from your partner related to emotional intimacy? What specific action steps will you both take to help enhance your closeness and connection? Write these down and determine how and when you will initiate these changes or actions.

Section 8: Personal Habits

1. Do I have any personal habits that get on your nerves? If so, what are they?
2. How should I let you know about a habit of yours that bothers me?
3. Do you have any bad habits you feel you must hide from me?
4. What positive habits could we work on together?
5. What bad relationship habits have we developed that need to change?
6. What parenting habits have we developed that negatively impact our relationship?
7. How are we positive role models for our children, family, or friends with our habits?
8. Do I have emotional habits that drag you down or make you feel bad? If so what are they?
9. Are you comfortable with my hygiene and self-care? If not, what makes you feel uncomfortable?
10. How can we be more accepting of areas of incompatibility with our habits?

Follow-up: Are there any behavior adjustments you'd like to request from your partner related to personal habits? What specific action steps will you both take to improve your habits together and change habits that need changing? Write

these down and determine how and when you will initiate these changes or actions.

Section 9: Disagreements and Differences

1. What do I say or do that really pushes your buttons?
2. What seems to be the recurring theme or themes in our conflict?
3. What makes you feel heard and understood when we have conflict?
4. When is the best time for us to resolve conflict?
5. How can you best manage anger or frustration so we can talk calmly?
6. What do you see as the major differences between us in the way we handle conflict?
7. Which of these differences do we need to work on for healing, resolving, or managing?
8. What should we do if we reach an impasse?
9. What can we promise each other that we will never say or do during times of conflict?
10. How can we reframe conflict to make it a positive opportunity or experience for us?

Follow-up: Are there any behavior adjustments you'd like to request from your partner related to disagreements and differences? What specific action steps will you both take to improve your conflict resolution and

understanding of each other during conflict? Write these down and determine how and when you will initiate these changes or actions.

Section 10: Past Wounds

1. What are your deepest wounds from the past and how can I support you there?
2. What pain or wounds from past relationships might be impacting our relationship?
3. How have your parents and their relationship impacted your expectations or needs in our relationship?
4. What emotional patterns do you see yourself repeating?
5. What do I unconsciously do that triggers pain from the past?
6. How can I make you feel safe to be vulnerable about your pain and fears?
7. Is there anything about your past you are uncomfortable sharing with me, and if so, how can I make you feel more comfortable?
8. How are you allowing the past to continue to make you unhappy?
9. What steps are you willing to take to heal from the past?
10. What can we both learn from our past wounds that will help us improve our relationship going forward?

Follow-up: Are there any behavior adjustments you'd like to request from your partner related to past wounds? What specific action steps will you

both take to improve your compassion and understanding of each other and yourselves related to the past? Write these down and determine how and when you will initiate these changes or actions.

Section 11: Time Together and Alone

1. How much time do you think is optimal for us to spend together as a couple?
2. On a typical day, how would you like us to spend time together?
3. How much time do we need to spend talking about our relationship?
4. How much time is optimal for us to spend going out and having fun?
5. How much alone time do you need?
6. What triggers you to crave alone time?
7. How can I let you know I need alone time without hurting your feelings?
8. If we differ on the amount of time we need alone, how can we compromise?
9. How are we allowing our children, work, or other distractions or commitments to compromise our time together?
10. What are some specific actions we can take so we can enjoy more time together?

Follow-up: Are there any behavior adjustments you'd like to request from your partner related to spending time together or being alone? What specific action steps will you both take to improve your quality time

together and understanding of each other and yourselves related to your needs for alone time? Write these down and determine how and when you will initiate these changes or actions.

Section 12: Friends

1. How much time do you want to spend with your friends?
2. How should we handle it, if one of us feels resentful of time spent with friends?
3. Do I have any friends you don't like or feel uncomfortable around? If so, why?
4. How often should we spend time with friends as couples?
5. What are your favorite things to do with our couple friends?
6. How often do you feel comfortable having friends in our home?
7. Which of our friends could you see us traveling with?
8. How do you feel about me having friends who are the opposite sex?
9. Do you feel jealous of any of my friendships, and if so, why?
10. How can we become better friends to each other?

Follow-up: Are there any behavior adjustments you'd like to request from your partner related to friends and spending time with friends? What specific action steps will you both take to improve your understanding of each other and yourselves related to your friendships you have as a

couple? Write these down and determine how and when you will initiate these changes or actions.

Section 13: Extended Family

1. How much time should we spend with our extended families (parents, siblings, etc)?
2. What holiday or traditions do you feel strongly we spend with your extended family?
3. How should we communicate to the extended family about our new family traditions and create our family boundaries?
4. How can we work it out, if we disagree about the amount of time spent with our extended family?
5. How do we handle behavior, expectations, or demands that we don't like from our extended family?
6. How can we make sure we put our relationship before our extended families?
7. Is there anything I do that makes you feel I don't put you ahead of my extended family?
8. How would you like me to handle it, if someone in my family says or does something to offend you, in person or behind your back?
9. Who in our family would best serve as guardians for our children?
10. What is your rule as a couple about discussing marital problems with extended family?

Follow-up: Are there any behavior adjustments you'd like to request from your partner related to extended family and spending time with extended family? What specific action steps will you both take to improve your understanding of each other and yourselves related to your families and how you interact with them? Write these down and determine how and when you will initiate these changes or actions.

Section 14: Spiritual Life and Values

1. What are your top five personal values?
2. What should our most important values as a couple?
3. How are we prioritizing our values in our life and family?
4. What do we need to change to live closer to our values?
5. How important is your spiritual life, and how do you practice it?
6. What should we do as a couple to enhance our spiritual lives together?
7. If we don't share the same spiritual or religious views, how is this impacting our relationship?
8. How would you react if my religious or spiritual views changed, and we no longer share the same views?
9. What religious or spiritual beliefs do you have from your primary family that might no longer work for you?
10. What spiritual or religious views do we want to teach our children?

Follow-up: Are there any behavior adjustments you'd like to request from your partner related to your spiritual life and values? What specific action steps will you both take to improve your understanding of each other and yourselves related to your values and spirituality? Write these down and determine how and when you will initiate these changes or actions.

Section 15: Health and Fitness

1. What can we do as a couple to create a healthier lifestyle?
2. What physical activities could we do together to improve our fitness?
3. What specifically could we change about our eating habits or diet that would be healthier?
4. How should we handle it, if our health and fitness goals are different?
5. How do you want me to treat you, when you feel sick or have an illness?
6. Do I have any bad health habits that really bother you? If so, what are they?
7. How can I ask you to work on a bad health habit I observe in you?
8. How are we serving as healthy role models for our children and extended family and friends?
9. If you could improve one thing related to your health and fitness, what would it be?
10. How can I help and support you to achieve that one thing?

Follow-up: Are there any behavior adjustments you'd like to request from your partner related to health and fitness? What specific action steps will you both take to improve your health and fitness as a couple and as individuals? Write these down and determine how and when you will initiate these changes or actions.

Section 16: Work

1. How does your work (in a profession or as a parent/homemaker) impact your overall happiness in our life together?
2. What makes you most happy and unhappy with your job?
3. How can I best support you in your work?
4. If your unhappiness at work is impacting our relationship or family, what would you be willing to do to address the problem?
5. How can you manage stress from your job, so it doesn't impact our life at home?
6. How many hours a day is enough for you to spend at work?
7. How should we handle it, if I feel you are spending too much time at work and not enough time with me?
8. Where do you see yourself in your career in the next five years? The next ten?
9. How much job security do you think you have?
10. What is your plan should you decide to leave your job?

Follow-up: Are there any behavior adjustments you'd like to request from your partner related to your careers? What specific action steps will you both take to support each other's career goals and manage your own stress related to your work? Write these down and determine how and when you will initiate these changes or actions.

Section 17: Children and Parenting

1. What are our guiding principles as parents?
2. What do you see as my best parenting skills?
3. Where do you struggle most in parenting our children?
4. What parenting skills from your parents do you want to emulate with our children?
5. What do you want to do differently from your parents?
6. How do we handle disagreements related to parenting our children effectively?
7. How can we manage the stresses of parenting so we don't take it out on each other?
8. How can I best support you as a co-parent in this family, particularly when you feel stressed?
9. What are some specific ways we can put our relationship first so our household isn't "child centered"?
10. What do we agree we will never say or do in front of our children?

Follow-up: Are there any behavior adjustments you'd like to request from your partner related to your children? What specific action steps will you both take to support each other as parents and maintain integrity of your relationship as a couple? Write these down and determine how and when you will initiate these changes or actions.

Section 18: Money

1. What are your long-term financial goals for us?
2. What should we do to stay on top of our financial goals?
3. What are your values and beliefs about money?
4. What causes you the most worry or frustration about money right now?
5. How are our spending and saving habits complementary?
6. How are our spending and saving habits different?
7. How should we handle it if we have a disagreement about money?
8. What kind of debt do you feel is acceptable for us?
9. How much money should we save each month?
10. Do you feel on top of our finances and know where our money is going? If not, how can I help you be more aware of this?

Follow-up: Are there any financial concerns you'd like to better understand from your partner's viewpoint? What specific action steps will you both take to support each other in your financial goals as a couple? Write these down and determine how and when you will initiate these changes or actions.

Section 19: Life Crises

1. How have you reacted in the past to serious life problems, such as a death or job loss?
2. How can I support you during a time of crisis?
3. How could we prepare for a job loss or financial crisis?
4. If I had a life-threatening illness, how would you react or cope?
5. What kind of crisis could potentially harm our relationship, and how would we handle it?
6. What do we need to do to plan and prepare should one of us die unexpectedly?
7. How do you grieve the loss of something or someone you cherish?
8. What life crisis do you fear the most? Why?
9. What else can we do to prepare or protect ourselves from unexpected crises?
10. How can we adopt a "growth mindset" when a big life crisis occurs?

Follow-up: Are there any life crises you'd like to better understand from your partner's viewpoint? What specific action steps will you both take to support each other in these life concerns as a couple? Write these down and determine how and when you will initiate these changes or actions.

Section 20: Goals and Dreams

1. What kind of legacy do we want to leave our children and the world?
2. If you didn't have the job you have now, what would be your dream career?
3. What are ten things on your bucket list?
4. If we won the lottery, what would you want to do with the money?
5. Who would you like to spend more time with, and what relationships would you like to develop?
6. If we didn't live in this city, where would you like to live?
7. If you didn't have to work, how would you spend your time?
8. What do you feel most proud of?
9. What do you personally want to achieve during the next five to ten years?
10. What do you see us doing during our retirement years

11. How can we continue to improve our relationship and become closer, kinder, and more intimate?

Follow-up: Are there any goals and dreams you'd like to better understand from your partner's viewpoint? What specific action steps will you both take to support each other in your goals as a couple? Write these down and determine how and when you will initiate these changes or actions.

50 Bonus Questions for Fun

1. How would you describe yourself?
2. What was the happiest moment of your life?
3. What was your most embarrassing moment?
4. What is your first childhood memory?
5. Who has been the most influential person in your life and why?
6. What is something you did as a teenager that your parents never learned about?
7. What's your favorite time of year and why?
8. If you were asked to give yourself a new name, what would it be?
9. If you were asked to give me a new name, what would it be?
10. If we hadn't met each other, where would you be right now?
11. What was on your mind the last time we were having sex?
12. What is your favorite sexual memory of us?
13. What movie reminds you of us?
14. Which of your parents are you most like and in what ways?
15. What is your favorite thing I ever did for special occasion for you?
16. What's your favorite physical feature on you?
17. Who was your favorite teacher when you were a child?
18. Which significant other before me had the biggest impact on you?
19. What's the angriest you ever felt?
20. Which of your personality traits do you wish you could change?
21. Which of your parents did you go to when you wanted to talk and why?

22. Which of your friends would you choose if you had to be on a desert island with just one?
23. When you were a kid, did you feel that you fit in? Why or why not?
24. If you could go back in time, what age would you be again?
25. If you could see into the future, what would you want to know?
26. What is the best thing about our relationship?
27. Are you an optimist, a pessimist, or a realist?
28. What things about me make you know I'm the one for you?
29. If our house was on fire and you had a chance to grab only five things before leaving, what would they be?
30. If you could be born again as someone else, who would you be and why?
31. What is your favorite song of all time and why?
32. What is the worst decision you ever made?
33. If you could hand pick the leader of our country, who would it be and why?
34. What kind of animal do you see yourself as?
35. What kind of animal do you see me as?
36. If you could boil down your life philosophy into one sentence, what would it be?
37. If you could remain one age forever, how old would you be?
38. Would you be willing to live a year in another country where we don't speak the language? Why or why not?
39. If you had one magical superpower, what would it be?
40. How do you think other people perceive you?
41. Aside from me, who really knows you the best?
42. What is the wackiest thing you've ever done?
43. Have you ever had a supernatural or unexplainable experience? If so, what was it?
44. What do you believe happens immediately after we die?
45. In what situations do you feel the most confident and sure of yourself?
46. In what situations do you feel the least confident?

47. What is the best thing you learned from your mom and dad?
48. What one major life regret do you have?
49. On an average day, what do you think about the most?
50. What makes you feel most fulfilled in our relationship?