

A romantic couple is shown from behind, embracing each other on a paved path. The man, on the left, wears a light blue and white checkered button-down shirt. The woman, on the right, has long, wavy brown hair and is wearing a grey t-shirt and a dark, patterned belt. The background is a soft-focus sunset with warm orange and yellow light filtering through green foliage. The overall mood is intimate and peaceful.

UNCOVERING THE MANUAL

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WHAT IS GOING ON?

Why do some relationships flourish over time while others wilt? Often it is because of the cultural parameters we have set around what a relationship "should" look like and the checklist of expectations we hold over our partners.

From "Love Languages" to Couples Retreats, the search for connection with your partner in the midst of nurturing your career, raising children, trying to attend to your health and get some space for yourself can be a challenging one.

Often it is made more challenging if you feel embarrassed about your relationship trouble and don't feel like you have the support to talk about it with anyone.

Perhaps you have considered marriage counselling but your spouse isn't open to it or doesn't believe the problem is "that bad".

So day after day you find yourself bickering and feeling resentment build that your partner isn't living up to their end of the deal.

The reason you feel that way is often because you think that what your partner does has an impact on you.

You probably believe, like most do, that your spouse should do things they know will make you happy and never do anything that might upset you.

THE MANUAL

In Life Coaching, we call this The Manual.

It is essentially an instruction manual you have written for your partner. If they follow the instructions, it means they love you and if they don't follow it means they don't care about you.

For example;

If my partner loved me they would:

- make me breakfast every morning
- compliment my appearance
- take me out to dinner at least once per week
- buy me gifts "just because"
- call me during the day to see how I am doing

Your list is probably much longer and it also includes all the things they aren't allowed to do for example:

If my partner loved me they would NEVER:

- get upset with me
- question my decisions
- ask me to stay home with the kids so they can spend time with friends
- forget my birthday

Your list is probably a lot longer here too.



WHAT IS IN YOUR MANUAL?

**LIST ALL THE EXPECTATIONS OF WHAT YOUR
PARTNER (OR A "GOOD" PARTNER SHOULD DO**

**BESIDE EACH ITEM, WRITE WHAT WOULD YOU
MAKE IT MEAN IF YOUR PARTNER IT PERFECTLY**



WHAT IS IN YOUR MANUAL?

**LIST ALL THE EXPECTATIONS OF WHAT YOUR OR
A "GOOD" PARTNER SHOULD NEVER DO**

**WHAT WOULD YOU MAKE IT MEAN IF YOUR
PARTNER DOES DO ANY OF THESE THINGS?**



TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE

While you are busy keeping track of all the things your partner is or isn't doing to "prove" their love for you, chances are so are they.

Some couples will even give each other their Manuals in the form of a list.

But listing out your "needs" and desires to your partner often intensifies the arguments because now you are both walking on eggshells trying to meet the expectations of your partner while at the same time scrutinizing EVERYTHING they do.

For many couples this only amplifies the feelings of resentment and disconnection because now they are actively keeping score of who is delivering the other person's "needs" better.

This can create a greater divide in a partnership because neither person really wants to spend their life adhering to someone else's expectations.



IF YOUR PARTNER ACTED THE WAY YOU WANTED...

**HOW WOULD YOUR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS
ABOUT THEM CHANGE?**

**WOULD YOU WANT THEM TO BEHAVE THIS WAY
EVEN IF THEY DIDN'T WANT TO? WHY OR WHY
NOT?**



ANOTHER OPTION

CONSIDER THE BEHAVIOURS YOU WISH YOUR PARTNER WOULD CHANGE. DO YOU EVER BEHAVE THAT WAY?

WHEN SOMEONE WANTS YOU TO BEHAVE IN A CERTAIN WAY SO THEY CAN FEEL GOOD, WHAT IS THAT LIKE FOR YOU?

CONSIDER WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR EXPECTATIONS AND DESIRES FOR YOURSELF. WHAT DO YOU IMAGINE THAT WOULD THAT BE LIKE?



WHY THIS MATTERS

Before you can change things in your relationship you need to see the ways in which you are giving your emotional power away when you have a Manual for your partner.

The truth is, as adults, you are both each allowed to do whatever you want. You can not control another adult human and the decision to feel happiness, love, anger or resentment lies not with them and what they do, but with you.

If you are emotionally tied to whether they do what you want them to or not, then you have given them ownership of your emotional life.

Arguments usually begin when someone makes another persons words or actions mean something about them. But once you start to see your Manual for your spouse or partner, you have begun to give yourself a little bit of space.

As you become more aware of the Manual you have for them and decide what the most empowering thoughts and feelings you want to have for yourself are you will get more space to decide how you want to respond in a moment of tension.

This helps you to create better results in your life without trying to control or manipulate your partner with hopes that their behaviour will make you feel better.