

In order to have a satisfying and strong relationship, it is important to define what each of you is hoping for in your lives together. Having a shared Relationship Vision keeps a couple strong. Creating this sort of document can act as a roadmap helping you and your partner to know whether or not the relationship is "on course", and whether or not any corrective measures need to be taken as you move through time together. This document which be reviewed, assessed and modified on a periodic basis (for example, once or twice a year).

**Steps:**

1. On your own sheet of paper, each write a series of short sentences that describe your personal vision of what sorts of focuses and goals you would like for yourself and for your relationship. This may include qualities and goals already in place and those you would like to create.
  - In the present tense
  - In positive terms (what you want, not what you don't want)
  - Be specific!
  - Use "We" statements. For examples, "We go out one night a week without the children and enjoy a romantic dinner." "We are focusing on my career for the next 2 years"
2. Consider the following areas of your relationship:
  - romance, intimacy and sexuality
  - money, finances, spending, budgeting
  - family (immediate and extended), children, parenting
  - emotional, connection and attachment, communication and conflict resolution
  - personal development and relationship development
  - spiritual
  - what are your life dreams?
  - what is it that you definitely want to do in your life that you have not yet fulfilled?
  - what is your larger struggle?
3. Share your sentences. Note the items that you have in common and underline them. If your partner has written sentences that you agree with but did not think of, add them to your list. For the moment ignore items that are not shared.
4. Now turn to your own expanded list and rank each sentence, including the ones not shared with a number from 1-5 according to its importance to you (1 very important, 5, not so important).
5. Circle the two items that are most important to you

6. Put a check mark beside those items that you think would be most difficult for the two of you to achieve
7. Now work together to design a mutual relationship vision similar to the example below. This is a 'living document' that will likely change over time. Life is not static and changes are part of the process. This is often the most challenging portion of the exercise. Start with the items that you both agree are most important, put check marks beside items you both agree would be difficult to achieve. At the bottom of the list write items that are relatively unimportant. If you have items that are a source of conflict between you, see if you can come up with a compromise statement that satisfies you both. Be prepared that this could entail several conversations and perhaps even a process of negotiation, deliberation and compromise.
8. You can also define a time-line to work with. Start with a shorter time-frame and work slowly into the future. For example, start with 3 months, then move along to 6 months, a year and so on.

**Example**

Partner 1	Partner 2
1 We have fun together	1
1 We settle our differences peacefully	1
1 We are healthy and physically active	1
1 We communicate easily and openly	1
1 We are best friends	1
1 We are sexually faithful	1
2 We both have satisfying careers	2
2 We travel annually	2
3 We have daily private time	4
3 We are financially secure	4
4 We live close to our parents	5

Creating a Relationship Vision allows couples to become more deliberate and intentional with their lives together, maximizing the chances of staying on track. Although you can't control everything, you can plan and increase the chances of reaching your wishes and hopes for yourself, your relationship, and your life.