Finding Happiness and Enhancing Your Personal Life

Learning Objectives
After studying the information and doing the exercises in this chapter, you should be able to:

- Explain how happiness is contingent on keeping the various spheres of life in balance
- Specify factors that contribute to personal happiness
- Describe a plan for meeting a romantic partner
- Explain how partners can meet the challenge of being a two-income couple
- Choose among techniques for keeping a relationship of yours vibrant
When it comes to finding that special someone, Steve Lee waxes analytic: In 16 months, the Manhattan hedge-fund manager sped through 2,500 three-minute HurryDates, at about $1.45 per day, not to mention 100 “real dates” that lasted at least the length of a cup of coffee.

“I take a very practical approach to finding the right person,” says Lee, a Wharton Business School graduate who likens the dating market to the stock market, tossing around terms such as “liquidity” and “market value.” In fact, if he had his druthers, those minidates would last a minute, just enough time to gauge someone’s personality and whether “they have bad breath.”

Last September, 495 days into this, his “second full-time job,” Lee found social worker Elyse Hart, 30, “by far the most amazing person I’ve met in my life.” They’ve made it past date number 10. The marriage proposal? That’s scheduled for “around February 7.”

Some people would criticize Steve Lee for being too planned and business-like in his approach to finding romance. Yet the point he illustrates is profoundly important. A meaningful romantic relationship is so important for a person’s well-being that finding such a relationship merits extensive effort and attention. In this final chapter, we look at some of the major issues involved in leading an enriched personal life: the components of happiness, finding a partner, managing a two-income relationship, and keeping a relationship vibrant.

▲ ACHIEVING HAPPINESS

When asked what is the most important thing in life, most people respond, “Happiness.” Research and opinion on the topic indicate that people can take concrete steps to achieve happiness. Planning for happiness is possible because it appears to be somewhat under people’s control. Another factor to consider is that many researchers consider happiness to be a natural human condition. David T. Lyken observes that those genes that combine to produce a happy person were favored by natural selection. Given that happier people were more likely to survive, the survivors tend to be a happy breed.

Our approach to the unlimited topic of understanding how to achieve happiness involves a model of happiness, a listing of keys to happiness, and the five principles of psychological functioning.
THE SPHERES OF LIFE AND HAPPINESS

A practical way of understanding happiness is that it is a by-product of having the various components of life working in harmony and synchrony. To understand this approach, visualize about six gears with teeth, spinning in unison. As long as all gears are moving properly (and no teeth are broken), a state of equilibrium and fluid motion is achieved. Similarly, imagine that life has six major components. The exact components will differ among people. For most people, the components would be approximately as follows:

1. Work and career
2. Interpersonal life, including loved ones and romantic life
3. Physical and mental health
4. Financial health
5. Interests and pastimes, including reading, surfing the Internet, and sports
6. A spiritual life or belief system, including religion, science, or astrology

When a person has ample satisfactions in all six spheres, he or she achieves happiness. However, when a deficiency occurs in any of these six factors, the person’s spheres are no longer in harmony, and dissatisfaction or unhappiness occurs. Yet sometimes if a person is having problems in one sphere, satisfaction in the other spheres can compensate temporarily for a deficiency in one. For the long range, a state of happiness is dependent on all six spheres working in harmony. In short, the theme of this book surfaces again: Work and personal life are mutually supportive. Figure 16-1 presents the spheres-of-life model of happiness.

People vary as to how much importance they attach to each sphere of life. A person with intense career ambitions, for example, might place less weight on the interests sphere than would a more leisure-oriented person. However, if any of these spheres are grossly deficient, total happiness will not be forthcoming. Another source of variation is that the importance people attach to each sphere may vary according to the stage of life. A full-time student, for example, might need just enough money to avoid worrying about finances. However, after about 10 years of full-time career experience, a person’s expenses might peak. The person would then attach more importance to the financial sphere.

THE KEYS TO HAPPINESS

Much research has been conducted about the ingredients of happiness. If you are aware of these contributors to happiness, you might be able to enhance your happiness. The spheres-of-life model of happiness also furnishes
direction for the person seeking happiness: Strive for acceptable levels of achievement in all six spheres. Here we summarize and synthesize a wide range of research and opinion on the keys to happiness.3

1. Give high priority to the pursuit of happiness. Having the intention or goal of being happy will enhance your chances of being happy. A key principle is to discover what makes you happy and make the time to pursue those activities. Spending time doing what you enjoy contributes directly to happiness.

2. Experience love and friendship and find a life partner. A happy person is one who is successful in personal relationships and who exchanges care and concern with loved ones. Happy people are able to love and be loved. Hugging people you like or being hugged by them is an important part of having enjoyable personal relationships. Married adults, in general, are happier than unmarried, and the results are similar for men and women. According to the Men’s Health Network, married men take fewer health risks, eat better, and are involved in more health-enhancing behaviors. Furthermore, married men also earn an average of 10 to 40 percent more than those never married, even with comparable education and work experience.4 (Good health and high income make some contribution to happiness.) Despite the consistency of this finding about marriage, it must be interpreted cautiously. It takes a satisfying marriage to bring happiness, and unmarried partners who have a long-term, caring relationship are also likely to be happy.

3. Develop a sense of self-esteem. Self-love must precede love for others. High self-esteem enables one to love and be loved. Developing a good
self-image leads to the self-esteem required for loving relationships. A feeling of self-worth is important because it helps prevent being overwhelmed by criticism. An important part of developing self-esteem is to not want financial success more than other things. Insecure people seek society’s approval in the form of purchasing consumer goods and accumulating investments.

4. **Work hard at what you enjoy and achieve the flow experience.** Love may be the most important contributor to happiness, with staying involved in work you enjoy coming in second. To achieve happiness, it is necessary to find a career that fits your most intense interests. In addition, it helps to achieve regularly the flow experience mentioned in Chapters 2 and 12. Happiness stemming from flow is powerful because it is not dependent on favorable external circumstances, such as recognition or love. The individual creates the happiness that follows from flow. Hard work contributes to happiness in another important way. A fundamental secret of happiness is accomplishing things and savoring what you have accomplished. Lyken, the happiness researcher mentioned above, argues that happiness is available to anyone who develops skills, interests, and goals that he or she finds meaningful and enjoyable. A log cabin dweller who lived off the land and whose goal was to be close to nature would therefore be happier than a wealthy person in a luxurious house who was not leading the lifestyle he or she wanted.

5. **Appreciate the joys of day-to-day living.** Another key to happiness is the ability to live in the present without undue worrying about the future or dwelling on past mistakes. Be on guard against becoming so preoccupied with planning your life that you neglect to enjoy the happiness of the moment. The essence of being a happy person is to savor what you have right now.

6. **Be fair, kind, helpful, and trusting of others.** The Golden Rule is a true contributor to happiness. It is also important to practice charity and forgiveness. Helping others brings personal happiness. Knowing that you are able to make a contribution to the welfare of others gives you a continuing sense of satisfaction and happiness. Related to fairness and kindness is trust of others. Happy people have open, warm, and friendly attitudes.

7. **Have recreational fun in your life.** A happy life is characterized by fun, zest, joy, and delight. When you create time for fun (in addition to the fun in many kinds of work), you add an important element to your personal happiness. However, if you devote too much time to play, you will lose on the fun of work accomplishments. In choosing fun activities, avoid overplanning. Because novelty contributes to happiness, be ready to pursue an unexpected opportunity or to try something different.

8. **Learn to cope with grief, disappointment, setbacks, and stress.** To be happy, you must learn how to face problems that occur in life without being overwhelmed or running away. It is also important to persevere in attempting to overcome problems rather than to whine or engage in self-pity. Once you have had to cope with problems, you will be more able to appreciate the day-to-day joys of life.

9. **Live with what you cannot change.** Happiness researcher Martin Seligman says that attempting to change conditions unlikely to change
sets us up for feeling depressed about failing. Weight loss is a prime example. Nineteen out of 20 people gain the weight they lost. It is therefore better to worry less about weight loss and concentrate on staying in good physical condition by engaging in moderate exercise. Good condition contributes much more to health than does achieving a weight standard set primarily to achieve an aesthetic standard. You can then concentrate on being happy about your good physical condition instead of being unhappy about your weight.

10. **Energize yourself through physical fitness.** Engage in regular physical activity, such as dancing or sports, that makes you aerobically fit. Whether it is the endorphins released by exercise, dopamine released by the excitement, or just the relaxed muscles, physical fitness fosters happiness.

11. **Satisfy your most important values.** Based on a survey of over 6,000 individuals, Steven Reiss concluded that people cannot find lasting happiness by aiming to have more fun or seeking pleasure. Instead, you have to satisfy your basic values or desires and take happiness in passing. To increase your value-based happiness, you have to first identify your most important desires and then gear you life toward satisfying these values. Among these key values are curiosity, physical activity, honor, power, family, status, and romance. For example, if power and romance are two of your basic values, you can achieve happiness only if your life is amply provided with power and romance. Religion also fits into the realm of values, and religious people tend to be happier than nonreligious people.

12. **Lead a meaningful life.** Most of the 11 principles just stated, as well as the spheres-of-life happiness model, all point toward the conclusion that having a meaningful life is a major contributor to happiness. A meaning or an important purpose helps a person get through periodic annoyances that temporarily lower happiness. Seligman says that the ultimate level of happiness is the meaningful life. It consists of identifying your core strengths and then using them in the services of something you perceive to be bigger than you are. For example, if you are a greeting card designer and you perceive that you are contributing to improved personal relationships, you are likely to be happy.

**THE FIVE PRINCIPLES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL FUNCTIONING**

According to Richard Carlson, the best way to achieve inner serenity (or happiness) is to follow the five principles of psychological functioning. These principles act as guides toward achieving a feeling of inner happiness. The first is **thinking**, which creates the psychological experience of life. Feelings come about only after you thought about something or somebody. If you think of another person as attractive, it will lead to a warm feeling toward that person. People who learn to direct their thinking in positive directions will contribute to their own happiness. Remember that you produce your own thoughts.

The second principle is **moods**, meaning that the positive or negative content of your thinking fluctuates from moment to moment and day to day.
Practice ignoring your low (bad) moods rather than analyzing them, and you will see how quickly they vanish. Developing this skill will contribute substantially to healthy psychological functioning. The third principle is separate psychological realities. Because each person thinks in a unique way, everyone lives in a separate psychological reality. Accept the idea that others think differently than you, and you will have much more compassion and fewer quarrels. As a result, you will be happier. Also, if you accept the principle of separate realities, you will waste less time attempting to change people. At the same time, others will like you more, thus contributing to your happiness.

The fourth principle of psychological functioning is feelings. Combined with emotions, feelings are a built-in feedback mechanism that tells us how we are doing psychologically. If your feelings turn negative suddenly, you know that your thinking is dysfunctional. It is then time to make a mental readjustment. If you feel discontented, for example, it is necessary to clear the head and start thinking positively. As a consequence, you will experience contentment and happiness. A key point is that the person will maintain a sense of well-being as long as he or she does not focus on personal concerns.

The fifth principle is the present moment. Learning to pay attention to the present moment and to your feelings enables people to live at peak efficiency without the distraction of negative thinking. Much like the flow experience, the present moment is where people find happiness and inner peace. Carlson advises, “The only way to experience genuine and lasting contentment, satisfaction, and happiness is to learn to live your life in the present moment.”11 (This supports happiness key number 5.)

Now that you have studied attitudes and activities that contribute to happiness, you are invited to do Human Relations Skill-Building Exercise 16-1. It is designed to bring about a state of happiness.

**HUMAN RELATIONS SKILL-BUILDING EXERCISE 16-1**

*Achieving Happiness*

The following exercises will help you develop attitudes that contribute mightily to happiness.

1. **Start the day off right.** Begin each day with five minutes of positive thought and visualization. Commit to this for one week. When and how do you plan to fit this into your schedule?

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2. **Make a list of five virtues you believe in.** Examples would include patience, compassion, and helping the less fortunate.

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3. **Each week, for the next five weeks, incorporate a different virtue into your life.** On a simple index card, write this week’s virtue in bold letters, such as “helping the less fortunate.” Post the card in a prominent place. After you have completed one incident of helping the less fortunate, describe in about 10 to 25 words what you did. Also record the date and time.

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4. **Look for good things about new acquaintances.** List three students, customers, or coworkers you have just met. List three positive qualities about each.

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5. **List the positive qualities of fellow students or coworkers you dislike or have trouble working with.** Remember, keep looking for the good.

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6. **Think of school assignments or job tasks you dislike and write down the merits of these tasks.** Identify the benefits they bring you.

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7. **Look at problems as opportunities.** What challenges are you now facing? In what way might you view them that would inspire and motivate you?

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How many people have you heard complain about a poor social life because of circumstances beyond their control? Such complaints take various forms: “The women in this school are all unappreciative,” “The men at my school don’t really respect women,” “There’s absolutely nobody to meet at work,” or “This is the worst town for meeting people.”

Some of the people expressing these attitudes are systematic when it comes to handling business or technology problems. Under those circumstances, they use the problem-solving method. But when it comes to their social lives, they rely heavily on fate or chance.

The approach recommended here is to use your problem-solving skills to improve your personal life. Whatever the problem, try to attack it in a logical, step-by-step manner. The businessperson described in the chapter opener exemplifies the application of problem-solving skills to finding romance. We are not ruling out the influence of emotion and feeling in personal life. We are simply stating that personal life is too important to be left to fate alone. With good fortune you might form a relationship with a stranger you meet at a rapid-oil-change-and-lubrication center. Unfortunately, such good fortune is infrequent.

Too many people leave finding a new relationship to chance or to a few relatively ineffective alternatives. Too many unattached adults lament, “Either you go to a bar or you sit at home.” In reality, both men and women can find dates in dozens of constructive ways. It is a matter of identifying some of these alternatives and trying out a few that fit your personality and preferences. See Exhibit 16-1 for more details.

No matter which environment you choose for conducting your date or mate search, you will usually need to reach out and make contact with the other person. A subtle method of making contact is through flirting, described by etiquette consultant Letitia Baldrige as being understated, subtle, witty, teasing, and sophisticated. Flirting involves getting close to another person and making that person aware of you in the best possible way. Being charismatic helps substantially in flirting because charismatic people are charming and feel so comfortable complimenting others. An effective flirt extends a suggestion that is positive but not too explicitly romantic. You might flirt with a photographer by saying, “I would be very interested in seeing a few of your favorite photos. I have a lot of respect for photographers.” What have you found to be an effective method of flirting?

Body language is another key part of flirting. According to Dee Ann Stiles, some of the best signals for flirting include the simple touch, leaning toward the person, tilting your head with interest, winking, mirroring the other person, and teasingly twirling something, like straws or pens.

A key principle of finding romantic companionship is to be realistic in terms of the type of person you are likely to attract—one who will be interested in you. It is necessary to take a candid look at yourself and decide what category of people are most likely to be seeking a person of your general type. For example, a person in poor physical shape who smokes
EXHIBIT 16-1  

In Search of a Date?

Every relationship begins with one person meeting another. In order to find one good relationship, you may need to date more than a dozen people. Next is a sampling of potentially effective methods for making a social contact.

Highly Recommended

1. Participate in an activity that you do well and enjoy. For example, if you are a good racquetball player, use racquetball playing as a vehicle for meeting people.

2. Get involved in your work, studies, or another activity not logically related to dating. People naturally gravitate toward a busy, serious-minded person. Besides, the workplace has now become the number one, natural meeting place for singles. However, beware of some of the potential problems with an office romance, as described in Chapter 8.

3. Take courses in which the male-to-female ratio is in your favor, such as automotive technology for women and cooking for men.

4. Ask your friends for introductions and describe the type of person you are trying to meet—but don’t be too restrictive.

5. Get involved in a community or political activity in which many single people participate. A good example is to become a political party worker.

6. For men who like older women, go on a singles cruise. Most of these cruises attract many more women than men.

7. For women, join a National Guard reserve unit. The membership of these units is overwhelmingly male.

8. Take advantage of every social invitation to a party, picnic, breakfast, or brunch. Social occasions are natural meeting places.

9. Use an Internet dating service. Finding romance through an online dating service is growing rapidly in popularity and is much more in vogue than print ads. In a recent year, about 16 million people in the United States visited an online dating service. Internet dating services have so many members that it is often possible to restrict your choices to the geographic area you desire. Several dating services attempt to match people by compatible personality types, as measured by a personality test administered online. Most Internet dating services encourage members to post photographs. As with most forms of meeting people, you do not know if the facts presented about the prospective date are true. Some members of online dating services have been known to post photos of people other than themselves.

10. Participate in Internet chat rooms (cyberdating). Many people rely on the Internet as their exclusive method of finding romance. Chat rooms can be selected according to interests, including movie fans, gays and lesbians, and astrology believers. After exchanging a series of e-mail messages or instant messages, the two people

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arrange for an in-person meeting. Many of the people you meet might live in a faraway location. Another problem is that many chat room participants badly misrepresent themselves, and a few have proved to be deranged sex criminals.

11. Place a personal ad in a local newspaper or magazine, stating the qualifications you are seeking in a companion and how you can be reached. Personal ads have achieved such popularity that several national magazines now accept them. Personal ads are frequently integrated with voice mail. (You leave a voice message for the person who placed the ad.) Under many systems, your personal ad consists of a voice message to which people respond. Furthermore, some personal ads are strictly phone based, and no print ad appears. With some personals, your phone ad is also posted online. Be creative when composing an ad so that it stands out from others.

12. Join special-promotion singles groups, such as indoor tennis for singles or a singles ski weekend. Similarly, join singles groups associated with churches, temples, or mosques. Singles groups outside of religious institutions are also worth exploring.

At Least Worth a Try

1. While networking for career purposes, also prospect for social companions.

2. Join an introduction (dating) service, particularly one that has an established membership. Introduction services are usually best for those seeking to meet people over age 30 and are much more costly than other methods mentioned in this exhibit. Speed dating is a new trend in introduction services. A group of unattached people meets at a café or bar (or a section thereof) that has been rented out for the evening. The café is filled with tables for two, and each table is numbered. You will have a set amount of time of 3 to 10 minutes to interview a number of opposite-sexed members of the group. After the interviews, each member lists the people he or she would like to pursue. If the other person also wants to meet you, you are given the person’s telephone number and/or e-mail address.

3. Shop at supermarkets around dinnertime and from 11 P.M. to 2 A.M. You will frequently find other single people shopping at that time. Some women claim that you are the most likely to find an unattached male in the frozen food department around 6:30 P.M. because they are planning their evening meal.

4. Strike up a conversation while waiting in line for tickets at the movies, concerts, or athletic events.

5. Congregate or float around in large gatherings, such as rallies for causes, registration for courses, or orientation programs.

6. Organize a singles party and require each person invited to bring along an unattached person of the opposite sex—no regular couples allowed.

7. Find valid reasons for visiting other departments at your place of work. Chance meetings at photocopying machines and centralized printers, for example, have allegedly spawned thousands of romances.
heavily and does not participate in sports will have difficulty attracting an Olympic athlete. Besides, there are relatively few Olympic athletes, and most of them may already be attached.

An important consideration in searching for a relationship is to recognize when you are experiencing **quest fatigue**. This is the feeling of demoralization and disappointment that takes place when all your efforts at finding a date or mate fail.\(^1\) When quest fatigue sets in, give yourself some time off from the search. Enjoy your activities without a partner and revitalize yourself before resuming the quest.

▲ **WHY PEOPLE ARE ATTRACTED TO ONE ANOTHER**

As part of enriching social life, it is helpful to understand why people are attracted to each other. Understanding these forces may help in choosing a compatible person for a long-term relationship. Three different psychological explanations of why people develop a strong attraction to each other are balance theory, exchange theory, and the need for intimacy. Attraction can also be attributed to chemical or hormonal reasons. All four of these explanations, to be described next, can apply in a given situation.

**Balance Theory of Attraction**

According to **balance theory**, people prefer relationships that are consistent or balanced. If we are very similar to another person, it makes sense
WHY PEOPLE ARE ATTRACTED TO ONE ANOTHER

(it is consistent or balanced) to like that person. We are also attracted to similar people because they reinforce our opinions and values. It is usually reassuring and rewarding to discover that another person agrees with you or has similar values.\(^{16}\)

Balance theory explains why we are eager to stay in a relationship with some people, but it does not explain why opposites often attract each other. People sometimes get along best with those who possess complementary characteristics. A talkative and domineering person may prefer a partner who enjoys listening. The explanation is that a dominant person needs someone to dominate and therefore might be favorably disposed toward submissive people.

SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY OF ATTRACTION

A long-standing explanation of why two people become a couple is social exchange theory, the idea that human relationships are based mainly on self-interest. This research shows that people measure their social, physical, and other assets against a potential partner’s. The closer the match, the more likely they are to develop a long-term relationship.

Exchange theory has been able to predict the permanence of a relationship based on the way each partner feels he or she stacks up against the other. One study of 537 dating men and women found that partners who thought they were getting far more in exchange for what they were giving felt guilty and insecure. In comparison, those who believed they gave more than they got were angry.

The giving was mostly psychological. It included such things as being more physically attractive than the partner, kinder, or more flexible. The greater the imbalance, the more likely the couple was to split up; the more equitable the partners believed the exchange to be, the more likely they were to remain partners. One explanation of these findings is that the feeling of being taken advantage of corrodes a relationship. It is also disturbing to feel that you are taking advantage of your partner.\(^{17}\)

NEED FOR INTIMACY

For some, the balance and exchange theories of mutual attraction are too mechanical and logical. The late psychologist David McClelland proposed instead that love is an experience seated in the nonrational part of the brain (the right side). People who believe that they are in love have a strong need for intimacy. This craving for intimacy is revealed in the thoughts of people in love who are asked to make up stories about fictitious situations. Their stories reveal a preoccupation with harmony, responsibility, and commitment and a preference for a relationship that includes warmth and intimacy.

McClelland and his associates say that these themes show up repeatedly in many guises in the stories told by people who say they are in love. The same stories are told by people in situations where love feelings run high, such as just having seen a romantic movie.\(^{18}\)
The concept of love is part of the need for intimacy as well as a key part of understanding personal relationships. Every reader has an idea of what love means to him or her. Harry Stack Sullivan, the famous psychiatrist, developed a particularly useful description of love, as follows:

When the satisfaction or the security of another person becomes as significant to one as is one’s own satisfaction or security, then the state of love exists. So far as I know, under no other circumstance is a state of love present, regardless of the popular usage of the word.

A BIOCHEMICAL EXPLANATION OF ATTRACTIVENESS

Another explanation of why certain people are attracted to one another is based on chemicals and specifically hormones. According to this theory, our hormones direct us to sense or screen potential mates. After the initial biochemical attraction, our conscious, psychological preferences, (e.g., Does he enjoy action movies and golfing?) come into play. The interests and lifestyle preferences of the potential mate carry more weight after the initial attraction. While the biochemical factors are at work, the brain is processing the external clues people use to measure sex appeal. Among these personality factors are appearance, clothing, makeup, scent, body language, and voice.19

A more specific explanation of attraction between people is based on the presence of pheromones. These are chemical substances released by a person (or animal) to influence the behavior of another member of the same species. A person who emits high doses of pheromones will therefore attract more partners. Conversely, we are physically attracted to people with high doses of pheromones.

The pheromone theory is particularly geared toward explaining why one person is strongly attracted to another person on first sight. After the initial physical attraction, however, other, more rational factors (e.g., Is this person employed?) enter into the picture. Several companies sell cologne for men and perfume for women that allegedly contains pheromones, thus making it easier to attract Prince or Princess Charming and also to be noted by others. Because these “attractant” substances are considered cosmetics and not drugs, they are free from government regulation. Buyer beware.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHOOSING A PARTNER CAREFULLY

Having a plan for meeting a partner and understanding why people are attracted to each other should be regarded as helpful information for making the right choice. A principal problem in many poor relationships is that the couple used faulty judgment in choosing each other. Of course, it is difficult to be objective when choosing a partner. Your needs at the time may cloud your judgment. Many people have made drastic mistakes in choosing a spouse because they were lonely and depressed when they met the person they married. Being on the rebound from a relationship that went bad makes you particularly vulnerable.
The problem of mate selection is indeed complicated. Do you marry for love, companionship, infatuation, or all three? It has been pointed out that the success rate of the arranged marriages still practiced in a few countries is about as good as that of nonarranged marriages. Since most people have only a limited amount of time to invest in finding the ideal mate, they are content to marry a good fit.

An in-depth study of 300 happy marriages provides a practical clue about mate selection. The most frequently mentioned reason for an enduring and happy marriage was having a generally positive attitude toward each other. If you view your partner as your best friend and like him or her “as a person,” you will probably be happy together. As obvious as it sounds, choose only a life partner whom you genuinely like. Some people deviate from this guideline by placing too much emphasis on infatuation.

A unique approach to mate selection would be to ask your family and close friends what they thought of your potential for happiness with your prospective mate. Research supports the wisdom of this approach. Tara K. McDonald and Michael Ross studied 74 college students who had been dating approximately six months. The couples were asked how serious they thought they were, how satisfied they were in the relationship, and how in love they were. The researchers also asked the couples’ roommates and parents the same questions.

Follow-ups were conducted at 6 and 12 months to see which couples were still together and who made the most accurate predictions. The couples themselves were much more optimistic about the prospects for the relationship. Parents were more accurate than the couples in predicting the length of the relationship. The roommates, however, made the most accurate predictions.

The message here is to recognize that when you are contemplating choosing a life partner, you are facing one of life’s major decisions. Put all your creative resources into making a sound decision.

### WORKING OUT ISSUES WITHIN RELATIONSHIPS

People emotionally involved with each other often find themselves in conflict over a variety of issues, especially when they are emotionally dependent on each other. Without conflict, relationships would be artificial. Human relations specialists have formulated some ground rules for resolving the many types of conflicts that frequently occur in relationships. These rules supplement the techniques for conflict resolution presented in Chapter 9.

1. **Listen carefully and give feedback.** Many conflicts intensify because the people involved never stop to listen carefully to what the other side is trying to say. After listening to your partner’s point of view, express your feelings about the issue. Expressing your feelings leads to more understanding than expressing your judgments. It is preferable to say “I feel
left out when you visit your mother” than to say “You’re insensitive to my needs. Look at the way you visit your mother all the time.”

To help improve understanding, provide mutual feedback. Although you may disagree with your partner, communicate your understanding: “From your point of view, it’s frivolous of me to spend so much money on bowling. You would prefer that I invest money in home improvements.”

2. Use more positive behaviors than negative behaviors during arguments. A 10-year study of arguments between partners in relationships, involving hundreds of couples, supported several basic ideas about good human relations. Some negative emotions used in arguments are more toxic than others. At the top of the corrosive list are criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling (withdrawing from a discussion). On the positive side, the team of researchers found that happy couples use five times more positive behaviors in their arguments than negative behaviors. One way to be positive is to use humor to ease the tension in an argument. The humor is considered an effort to mend the conflict. To illustrate, Jennifer might be upset that her husband Larry spent most of his time at an office party they attended together talking to other women. On their way home, Jennifer said, “I don’t know whether to be angry at you for flirting all evening or to compliment you for networking with every woman at the party sharp enough to have a future in business.”

3. Define the real problem. What your partner or you grumble about at first may not be the real issue in the conflict. It will require mutual understanding combined with careful listening and sympathy to uncover the real problem. A man might be verbally attacking a woman’s dress when he really means that she has gained more weight than he would like. Or a woman might verbally attack a man’s beer drinking when her real complaint is that he should be out in the yard raking leaves instead of sitting inside playing video games.

4. Don’t hit below the belt. The expression “below the belt” refers to something that is unfair. Some issues are just plain unfair to bring up in a marital dispute. When you are intimate with another person, you are bound to know one or two vulnerable areas. Here are two below-the-belt comments:

“You’re lucky I married you. What other woman would have married a man who was so much of a loser that he had to declare bankruptcy?”

“Don’t complain so much about being abused verbally. Remember that your father went to jail for battering your mother.”

Is anyone really as cruel as the preceding quotes would suggest? Yes, in the heat of a tiff between partners, many cruel, harsh things are said. If two people want to live harmoniously after the conflict, they should avoid below-the-belt comments. Another problem is that these comments reflect negative rather than positive behaviors.

5. Be prepared to compromise. For many issues compromise is possible. The compromise you reach should represent a willingness to meet the other person halfway, not just a temporary concession. On some issues the only compromise can be letting the other person have his or her way now
and waiting to have your turn later. Among such issues that cannot be split
down the middle are whether to have children, whether to live in an apar-
tment or a house, whether to go to Miami or London for a vacation, or
whether to run a kosher or nonkosher household. Several of these issues
should be settled before marriage or living together since no real compro-
mise on the basic issue is possible in these instances.

6. Minimize an accusatory tone. You lessen the accusatory tone when
you make “I” statements instead of “you” statements. The door to dialogue
is opened when you make a statement such as, “I felt really disappointed
when you did not call me to ask about how my promotion interview went.”
You shut off dialogue when you say, “You don’t care about my happiness.
You didn’t even call to ask about how my promotion interview went.”

7. Use e-mail as a substitute for face-to-face confrontations. At times a
couple may be so emotionally charged that resolving conflicts face to face is
not possible. To back off temporarily from the difficulty of in-person conflict
resolution, it may be worthwhile to correspond through e-mail, messaging,
or hard-copy letters. According to Andrew Christensen and Neil Jacobsen,
the written message can help the couple avoid raising their voices and es-
calating the conflict.23 While sending notes to each other, it is valuable to put
down in writing what you think the other side is angry about. For instance,
“You are ticked off at me because I think your family is intolerant of people
who are not like themselves.” After dealing with the conflict in writing, the
couple may be calm enough to move on to a face-to-face discussion.

8. Be acquiescent when appropriate. A practical, although controver-
sial, approach to dealing with relationship conflict is to surrender to the
wishes of your partner from time to time.24 You submit to your partner’s
wishes rather than combating every small demand with which you dis-
agree. The idea is not to lose your self-respect but to minimize conflict over
issues that are not terribly important. Suppose the wife says to the hus-
band, “Let’s paint the kitchen the color of sand.” The husband would prefer
a sky blue kitchen, but he thinks to himself, “If I disagree on the kitchen
color, this will be the fourth time I’ve disagreed with one of Jennifer’s sug-
gestions this week. So, I’ll live with a sand-colored kitchen.” Or take this
scenario: The wife objects to attending a hockey game instead of going
dancing. She says to herself, “I’ll go along with the hockey game, even
though I would prefer a romantic evening. I’ve already nagged John
enough this week.”

The strategy of being acquiescent may appear to suppress conflict.
However, by submitting to a small demand today, you help establish a cli-
mate in which your small demands may be met the next time a disagree-
ment surfaces.

▲ MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF BEING
A TWO-INCOME COUPLE

The number of couples in which both partners have full-time jobs has
now reached 75 percent, as estimated by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Sta-
tistics. Two critical factors influencing this steady growth are women’s
career aspirations and the need for two incomes to meet living expenses. It is a challenge to run a two-income household in a way that will enhance the couple's personal life. In Chapter 7 we presented information about using organizational support systems to help reduce work–family conflicts. Following are suggestions that couples themselves can implement to increase the chances of a two-income household running more smoothly.

1. **Establish priorities and manage time carefully.** A major contributor to the success of a working couple relationship is careful time management. Each partner must establish priorities, such as ranking quality time together ahead of adding a community activity to the schedule. Or both partners might inform their employer of a certain date they would be taking as a vacation day to celebrate their wedding anniversary. Another aspect of priority setting and time management is to schedule time for romance. Many working couples fall into the trap of neglecting romantic time together because the job and household tasks consume most of their energy. As a consequence, joyful time together diminishes rapidly.

2. **Deal with feelings of competitiveness.** Feelings of competitiveness between husband and wife about each other's career often exist even when both have a modern outlook. Competitive feelings are all the more likely to surface when both parties are engaged in approximately the same kind of work. One man became infuriated with his wife when she was offered a promotion before he was. They had both entered the same big company at the same time in almost identical jobs. In contrast, the working couple with traditional views is unlikely to have a problem when the husband outdistances his wife in career advancement.

   The familiar remedy of discussing problems before they get out of hand is offered again here. One partner might confess to the other, “Everybody is making such a fuss over you since you won that outstanding employee award. It makes me feel somewhat left out and unimportant.” A sympathetic spouse might reply, “I can understand your feelings. But don’t take all this fuss too seriously. It doesn’t take away from my feelings for you. Besides, two months from now maybe people will be making a fuss over you for something.”

3. **Share big decisions equally.** A distinguishing characteristic of today’s two-income families is that both partners share equally in making important decisions about the domestic side of life. Under such an arrangement, neither has exclusive decision-making prerogatives in any particular area. He may make a decision without consulting her over some minor matter (such as the selection of a plant for the living room). She may make the decision the next time a plant is to be selected for inside the house. But on major decisions—such as relocating to another town, starting a family, or investing in the stock market or real estate—husband and wife collaborate.

4. **Divide the household tasks equitably.** Many women who work outside the home rightfully complain that they are responsible for too much of the housework and household errands. When household chores are di-
vided unequally, conflict in the home is probable. The recommended solution is for the working couple to divide household tasks in some equitable manner. Equity could mean that tasks are divided according to preference or the amount of effort required. In one family, the husband might enjoy food shopping while the wife enjoys cleaning. Assignments could be made accordingly. Each couple should negotiate for themselves what constitutes an equitable division of household tasks. To participate equitably in household chores and child rearing, one or both partners might have to reduce the amount of time invested in the career. (Do you recall the term *downshifting*?)

5. **Take turns being inconvenienced.** In a highly traditional family, the woman assumes the responsibility for managing inconvenient household tasks even if she, too, has a job outside the home. The underlying assumption may be that her work is less important than his work. For more modern couples, a more equitable solution is to take turns being inconvenienced. If Sue has to go to work late one day to be around for the plumber, Ted can go to work late when the dog has to be taken to the veterinarian. A working couple with children will frequently have to miss work because of a child’s illness or accident, parent-teacher conferences, or school plays.

6. **Develop adequate systems for child care.** Any working couple with a young child or children will attest to the challenge of adequately balancing work and child demands. Imagine this scenario: Your spouse has already left for work, and you discover that your four-year-old child has a fever of 102 degrees. The child care center will not accept a sick child, nor will your neighbor, who helps out occasionally. She fears contaminating her children. The logical solution is to stay home from work, but you have a crucial work meeting scheduled for 11 A.M.

One solution to dilemmas of this nature and less serious problems is to have a diverse support system. Make arrangements with at least three people, including relatives, who could help you out in an emergency. Retired people, for example, often welcome the challenge of helping out in an emergency.

7. **Decide who pays for what.** The problem of negotiating who pays for what arises for many two-income families. Many couples find that the additional expenses of a working couple prevent them from getting ahead financially. Child care expenses are often involved; restaurant meals become more frequent; and a second car is usually a necessity outside of large metropolitan areas. The “big pool” arrangement of dividing expenses works well for many couples. Under this arrangement, the couple pools its money into a joint account for household expenses and savings. Each partner receives personal spending money out of the common pot or from additional income such as second jobs.

When the two partners trust each other, a joint account might be maintained with one partner taking responsibility for bill paying. Another approach is for the couples to maintain separate accounts and divide bills on the basis of how much each partner earns. A third approach is for one partner to hand over a paycheck to the other, who has complete charge of bill
paying, budgeting, savings, and investments. The person who hands over
the paycheck would need to trust his or her partner completely.

▲ KEEPING YOUR RELATIONSHIP VIBRANT

One of the major challenges in personal life is to keep a relationship with
a partner vibrant. For many people, relationships that begin with enthusi-
asim, rapport, and compatibility end in a dull routine and splitting up. A
gruesome statistic is that nearly two-thirds of all first marriages end in
permanent separation or divorce. Understanding how to maintain a vi-
brant relationship is thus exceptionally important. For a relationship to suc-
cceed, the absence of misery is not sufficient. Instead, joy and delight must
also be present. Human Relations Self-Assessment Quiz 16-1 pinpoints
some of the symptoms of a relationship gone bad. Here we describe major
factors in achieving a mutually rewarding long-term relationship.

KEEP ROMANTIC LOVE IN PROPER PERSPECTIVE

A speaker told an audience that you can tell you are infatuated with your
partner if your heart begins pounding at a chance meeting with him or her.
An 80-year-old in the audience responded, “I know just what you mean. The
Mrs. and I have been married for 55 years, and that’s exactly how I feel
whenever I run into her downtown.” This happy husband is an exception; al-
though infatuation or romantic love is vital in getting a relationship started,
it usually cools down within several years. When infatuation declines, in-
stead of being disappointed, the couple should realize that the relationship
has grown more mature and lasting.

A relationship counselor observes that as full of rapture and delight
as the first phase of a relationship is, it is essentially a trick of nature de-
signed to bring us together. Nature knows that without the illusion of
perfection, we might not choose each other. After the emotional bond is
secure, nature lifts the veil. To avoid discouragement and disillusion-
ment, it is important to keep romantic love in proper perspective. It helps
launch a relationship but does not have to be kept at its initial high in-
tensity for a relationship to endure. However, the spark should not be
extinguished.

Another significant key to keeping romantic love in perspective is to re-
view your expectations in the relationship. Over the years, the expectations
for relationships have increased: People want more from marriage than in
times past. Fifty years ago, for example, more people thought of a marriage
as an institution primarily to raise a family and gain economic security.
Many more people today want marriages to be gratifying and satisfying and
intimate. So when these expectations are not met, one or both partners may
become discouraged. In reviewing your expectations, you might decide
that you have set the bar too high and are therefore creating the opportu-
nity for disappointment.
HUMAN RELATIONS SELF-ASSESSMENT QUIZ 16-2

Early Warning Signs of a Relationship in Trouble

You know your relationship is in trouble and in need of revitalization when several or more of the indicators below are present. The term “partner” refers to a spouse, boyfriend, girlfriend, or significant other.

- You observe that your partner has terrible table manners.
- You perceive that your partner is not as attractive or cute as you thought previously.
- The sound your partner makes with his or her teeth annoys you.
- Your conversation is confined to routine matters such as “Did you put gas in the car?” or “Why are you 15 minutes late?”
- A significant change in routine takes place, such as the partner calling every other day instead of at least once a day.
- You rarely plan ahead for social occasions, such as parties, dinner, or movies, but decide to go out at the last moment—such as making plans for Saturday night at 4 P.M. that day.
- You spend progressively less time together.
- You nitpick each other frequently, and all your partner’s quirks begin to bother you.
- You touch each other less and less, including holding hands while walking or driving the car.
- Your fights are more frequent and last longer.
- Small tokens of affection, such as sending love notes, almost disappear.
- You rarely mention your partner favorably to a third party.
- You notice frequent criticisms, including backhanded compliments, such as, “You look nice today for a person with so little taste in clothing.”
- You jump into binding commitments with little planning, such as having a baby, moving, or buying a house. (Quite often partners think that such major joint activities will save a sinking relationship.)
- You look for an opportunity to spend time with your friends, watching television, or surfing the Internet rather than with your partner.
- You rarely look forward to spending time alone with your partner.
- Neither partner ever says, “I love you” any longer.

HOLD COMMUNICATION SESSIONS

Good communication is vital for creating and maintaining a loving relationship. Therefore, one way to keep a relationship alive is to hold formal communication sessions in which you tell each other almost anything on your mind. The topics can be both positive and negative. A man may want to tell his partner of something she did that he appreciated very much. Or a woman may want to talk about the way her partner offended her in public. Or a couple may want to discuss concerns about finances, a child, in-law relations, or anything else. One of many reasons that communication sessions are important is that many couples have different perceptions about what is good and bad in their relationship. The communication sessions help clear up misperceptions. A vital aspect of these sessions is that both facts and feelings are expressed. The statement “I am really afraid we are drifting apart” communicates much more than “You and I haven’t been talking too much lately.” The role play at the end of this chapter explores the type of communication that can keep a relationship thriving.

Communication sessions are also important because they can sometimes revive a failing relationship. This is true because communication breakdowns often lead to failed relationships. Typically, in the early stages of a relationship, the couple is keenly attuned to each other’s thoughts and feelings. The partners look for small verbal and nonverbal signals of contentment and discontent in each other.

After the relationship seems secure, couples often replace the intense monitoring of the early stages with a nonrevealing style of communication. For example, the man and woman may mechanically say to each other, “How was your day?” or “Love ya.” This shorthand style of communication obstructs the sending and receiving of messages that could indicate the relationship is in trouble. Introducing communication sessions can make it possible for the couple to deal with subtle problems in the relationship.

Brief communication sessions are particularly needed when a couple travels together because so many relationships take a turn for the worse while traveling. Many couples, for example, are surprised by the conflict that emerges during their honeymoon. One of the problems is that such continuous contact with another person requires considerable adjustment. While driving in a car or seated next to each other in an airplane for a long period of time, the other person’s eccentricities become more evident. Have you ever heard of a couple fighting over the correct way to fold a road map?

STRIVE FOR NOVELTY IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP

An unfortunate aspect of many relationships is that they drift toward a routine. A married couple might go to the same place for vacation, meeting the same family and friends for years on end. A man dating a woman might call her every night at the same time. Or a couple’s sex life may turn into a routine. Many people have suggested that you try pleasant surprises to keep
your relationship vibrant and fun. Make up a list of your own, but here are a few ideas to jog your thinking:

- Ask your mate out for dinner on a Monday evening.
- Write your partner a poem instead of sending a commercial greeting card.
- Take up a new activity together in which you are both beginners (such as swing dancing or scuba diving) and learn with each other.

**TAKE AN OPTIMISTIC VIEW OF THE RELATIONSHIP**

Earlier we described the importance of being positive when working out differences in a relationship. Viewing your partner positively will often help the relationship stay romantic and endure. A 10-year study was conducted to identify what saves marriages, with the initial interviews accomplished within six months of marriage. Ninety-five Seattle-area couples were traced for seven to nine years. Couples who will endure see each other through rose-colored glasses and show positive behavior toward each other. Those who will divorce within six months see each other through fogged lenses, seeming cynical and unable to say good things about each other.

The researchers noted that more important than what was actually said was “if they expressed fondness and admiration for their partner, if they talked about themselves as a unit, if they finished each other’s sentences, reference each other when they told a story, and whether what came to mind was pleasant.”

Additional support for the link between positive behavior and a lasting relationship stems from research by John Gottman. He has videotaped thousand of couples with the aim of coding positive and negative facial expressions, body language, and comments. For instance, eye rolling in reaction to a spouse's comment is a strong predictor of divorce. The data of Gottman and his colleagues reveal that strong marriages have at least a five-to-one ratio of positive to negative interactions. As the ratio begins to drop, the marriage is at high risk for divorce. Four negative qualities are the most characteristics of couples that split: contempt, criticism, defensiveness, and stonewalling. Negative facial expressions also dampen a relationship.

**MAINTAIN A NONPOSSESSIVE RELATIONSHIP**

A nonpossessive relationship is one in which both partners maintain separate identities and strive for personal fulfillment yet are still committed to each other. Such a relationship is based on interdependent love—love involving commitment with self-expression and personal growth. A nonpossessive relationship does not mean that the partners have sexual relationships with other people.
HUMAN RELATIONS SKILL-BUILDING EXERCISE 16-1

Keeping Your Relationship Vibrant

The role-playing exercise described here will help you experience the type of communication and interaction required for keeping a relationship vibrant. As with any other role play visualize yourself in the role briefly described. Try to develop the feel and the flavor of the person depicted.

The man in this relationship is becoming concerned that his wife does not enthusiastically participate in activities involving his family. He prefers that he and his wife spend their Sunday afternoons with his parents and other relatives. He thinks they are all loads of fun and cannot imagine why his wife is beginning to drag her heels about spending time with them. Twice in the last month she has come up with excuses for not going along with him to visit his folks on Sunday.

The woman in this relationship still loves her husband but thinks his preference for Sunday afternoons with his folks is unreasonable. She thinks that it is time for her to pursue her own interests on Sunday afternoons. She plans to confront her husband about the situation this evening.

Two people act out this role play for about 10 to 15 minutes. Other members of the class can act as observers. Among the observation points will be the following: (1) How well did the couple get to the key issues? (2) How much feeling was expressed? (3) Do they appear headed toward a resolution of this problem?

A nonpossessive relationship is helpful because some people find the traditional form of marriage stifling. For example, many married people feel compelled to give up a hobby or interest because the partner does not share the interest. In a nonpossessive relationship, the couple can take many separate paths and pursue different interests and have friends of their own. Unfortunately, if couples pursue nonpossessive relationships too far, they wind up drifting away from each other. The reason is that happy partners spend considerable time with each other enjoying shared activities. Each couple must find the right balance between maintaining separate identities and spending sufficient time together to remain close.

To further develop your sensitivity to keeping a relationship vibrant, do Human Relations Skill-Building Exercise 16-1.

SUMMARY

A satisfying and rewarding personal life can help a person absorb a career setback and also contributes to a satisfying and rewarding career. Planning for happiness is somewhat under a person’s control. A practical way of understanding happiness is that it is a by-product of having the spheres of life working in harmony and synchrony. For most people, these spheres would be work and career; interpersonal life, including romance; physical and mental health; financial health; interests and pastimes; and spiritual life or belief system.
Contributors or keys to happiness include the following: (1) giving priority to happiness; (2) love and friendship; (3) self-esteem; (4) working hard at things enjoyed; (5) appreciation of the joys of day-to-day living; (6) fairness, kindness, helpfulness, and trust; (7) recreational fun; (8) coping with grief, disappointment, setbacks, and stress; (9) living with what you cannot change; (10) energizing yourself through physical fitness; and (11) developing a philosophy or system of belief.

According to Richard Carlson, the best way to achieve inner serenity (or happiness) is to follow the five principles of psychological functioning. First is thinking, which brings about feelings. Second is moods, including the idea that you can ignore bad moods. Third is separate psychological realities, meaning that each person thinks in a unique way. Fourth is feelings, which can be turned from negative to positive. Fifth is the present moment, which is where people find happiness and inner peace.

A good social life begins with finding people you want to date. Such an important activity in life should not be left to chance or fate alone. Instead, use a planned approach that includes exploring many sensible alternatives. Be realistic about the type of person you are likely to attract. However, when you experience quest fatigue, back off and enjoy activities without a partner.

Understanding why people are attracted to one another helps in choosing a compatible partner. The balance theory of attraction contends that people prefer relationships that are consistent or balanced, and therefore they are comfortable with people similar to themselves. According to social exchange theory, people seek relationships in which there is an even match of personal assets. A third explanation is that people are attracted to each other because their need for intimacy prompts them to fall in love. A fourth explanation of attraction is based on biochemistry, suggesting that our hormones direct us to sense or screen potential mates. After the initial biochemical attraction, our conscious, psychological preferences come into play.

Whatever the basis for attraction, a partner must be chosen carefully to help prevent a split based on a poor fit. One suggestion would be to ask your family and close friends what they thought of your potential for happiness with your prospective mate.

To keep an intimate relationship healthy, you should resolve issues as they arise. Suggestions for accomplishing this include (1) listening carefully and giving feedback, (2) being more positive than negative during arguments, (3) defining the real problem, (4) avoiding opening old wounds, (5) not hitting below the belt, (6) being prepared to compromise, (7) minimizing an accusatory tone, (8) communicating by e-mail when emotions are high, and (9) being alert to gender differences in communication.

Two-income couples are subject to unique pressures. To sustain a good relationship, a two-income (or dual-career) couple should consider these approaches: (1) establishing priorities and managing time carefully, (2) dealing with feelings of competitiveness, (3) sharing big decisions equally, (4) dividing the household tasks equitably, (5) taking turns being inconvenienced, (6) developing adequate systems for child care, and (7) deciding who pays for what.

Keeping a relationship vibrant is a major challenge. Among the approaches proposed to meet this goal are (1) keeping romantic love in perspective; (2) holding communication sessions, including while traveling;
(3) striving for novelty in your relationship; (4) taking an optimistic view of the relationship; (5) maintaining a nonpossessive relationship; and (6) maintaining a differentiation of self.

Questions and Activities

1. What are some of the skills a person needs to acquire to become happy?

2. How do your “spheres of life” compare with those in Figure 16-1?

3. Identify several positive and at least one negative consequence of being happy.

4. In this chapter you were told that the office has become the most frequent place for meeting a mate. In Chapter 9 you were cautioned about the hazards of an office romance. How do you integrate these two opinions?

5. What is your reaction to the practice of having a third party conduct a background investigation of a prospective mate? Also, should the prospective mate be informed of the investigation after it is completed?

6. What do you perceive to be the advantages and disadvantages of finding a romantic relationship over the Internet?

7. In what way is speed dating much like a job fair?

8. In Chapter 6 about communications, you were told that a problem with e-mail is that it may not be well suited to conveying feelings. In this chapter e-mail is recommended as a way of dealing with some of the emotional issues in a relationship. How do you reconcile this apparent contradiction?

9. When one person in a dual-income couple loses a job, should that person be responsible for all the household chores? Explain your reasoning.

10. Find a couple that has been together for 30 years or more. Find out what they perceive to be the secret of their successful relationship. Share your findings with class members.

INTERNET SKILL BUILDER: Daily Doses of Happiness on the Web

Visit www.thehappyguy.com to receive your “daily dose of happiness.” The Daily Dose of Happiness offers you happiness quotes and suggestions for self-actualization. Happyguy promises to help you achieve such ends as becoming inspired about life, discovering the meaning of happiness, and achieving personal growth. After trying out this program of happiness and personal growth, you be the judge. Have you made strides toward becoming happier? Do you feel any better emotionally? What impact do the Daily Happiness mugs have on your personal well being? Be happy!
The Love Lab

Psychologist John Gottman began his research on the quality of marital relationships 30 years ago. Since then, his University of Washington laboratory, called the Love Lab, has focused on determining exactly what makes marriages thrive or fail. The conversation that follows is a taken from the records of the Love Lab. Valerie, 24, and Mark, 25, have a young baby. They have recently moved, and both have new jobs.

Valerie: (Laughter) We don’t go that long without talking.
Mark: I know, I just start going stir-crazy.
Valerie: The problem...
M: Huh?
V: ... is, you told me that when you took the job as manager at Commonwealth that you’d come home in the afternoons and spend some time with us.
M: That’s right, but I did not say that it would start in the first week when I’m trying to do two different jobs. I gotta get myself replaced. Right now, I’m not just a manager.
V: It’s been three weeks.
M: Well, I just don’t go out on the street and say, “Hey you. Want to sell insurance?” It’s not that easy. There are two people in the program. One of them is probably gonna be hired within the next couple of weeks. But in the meantime it’s tough. It’s just the way it’s gotta be.
V: I realize that.
M: Okay.
V: But.
M: At midnight when you get off work and you’re all keyed up, I’m all worn out.
V: I realize that. That doesn’t bother me that much, you going to sleep at night.
M: I’ll just be starting to go to sleep and you’ll go, “Are you listening to me?” I’ll be trying to stay awake...
V: I’m laughing about it usually. I’m not upset about it.
M: I don’t know by then. I’m half out.
V: But now with me having a car, you’ll be able to go to sleep early and get up with Stephanie a little bit. That’s one of my big problems. I’m not getting any sleep. I don’t get to sleep until two.
M: I’ve been getting up with her.
V: You’ve been real good about that.
M: Okay.
V: I guess I just wish that you didn’t have to go in early.
M: Yeah, we don’t get a whole lot of time together.
V: When I have the car, I can get out and get stuff then. I feel like I’m stuck at home, and here you are... M: I’ll be able to meet you for lunch and stuff. I guess that wasn’t any big problem.
V: It is a problem. It seems like we talk about it every day.
M: Yeah, we do.
V: That’s about the only thing we really complain about.

(Continued)
M: Yeah. The last couple of nights I tried to take you out to the lake and look at the stars and stuff, so . . .
V: I know.
M: We just need to get used to our schedules.
V: That first week I was so, I was real upset, cause it seemed like all I did was stay home with Stephanie all morning till three and just work all evening. I wasn't doing anything. It didn't seem like we had family gatherings every weekend. We never had time to go out, just the two of us.
M: I got a little surprise for ya next weekend.
V: Yeah, it's always next weekend. It's never this weekend.
M: Eight weekends in a row.
V: I just went from not working at all and being home. We've both been through major job changes and all.
M: And I can't breathe.
V: But we're getting used to it, and I feel so much better about going to work at three, three-thirty now than I did that first week.
M: Um.
V: I just wish I had more time to do what I wanted to do. I, it's just being . . .
M: I'll be able to stay . . .
V: . . . a wife and mother.
M: . . . to stay at home during the days a little bit more or I'll have to go in early, but then I can take a couple of hours off in the afternoons.
V: Do you have to go in early every day?
M: 'Cause there are things I need to do every morning.
V: I think you just like going in to your office.
M: You don't know a thing about it then. Randy was in there early every day, tell me why?
V: Yeah, but he was home at a decent hour, too.
M: He stays out late.
V: Eight to eight or eight to nine every day.
M: Every day.
V: Now, then, I don't want you taking that job. You forget it.
M: No.

Questions

1. What evidence do you find in this transcript that Valerie and Mark have conflict and low levels of marital satisfaction?

2. What evidence do you find that Valerie and Mark have reasonably good marital satisfaction?

3. What recommendations can you offer Valerie and Mark to improve their relationship?

WEB CORNER

Dual career couples: www.bigcat.com/dual-career-couples.html
Enhancing the relationship of couples: www.couplebiz.com
Finding love: www.findinglove.com
Free dating service: www.dating.com
Speed dating: www.SpeedDatingSites.Com

REFERENCES

5. Lyken, Happiness, p. 67.
11. Ibid., p. 71
18. Ibid.


26. Ibid.


▲ ADDITIONAL READING


