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Creating a Couple Vision Statement

Why a Couple Vision? Couples often approach marriage from an individual perspective. What do I get out of this? Are all of my needs being met? If only s/he would change this one thing everything would be great. Should I stay in the relationship or go? When one of you pushes the other for change, it becomes a struggle: you versus me. Giving up something or changing just because your partner wants a change is very hard and usually creates resentment. Deciding to work together on your relationship, to cooperate for the sake of improving both your lives and possibly the lives of your kids, feels like a win-win.

Working on goals together feels like being on the same team. Teammates encourage each other and take feedback better than those locked in two-person struggle. A couple vision puts you on a team working on your relationship together. Viewing the relationship as a haven and support for each of you allows you to accomplish more than either of you would accomplish alone. Changes are easier with a support person at your side. Couples have used this model to improve their finances, sex lives, parenting skills, and to give their relationship more meaning and a sense of joint accomplishment.

Do it alone first: This outline helps you ask yourself some basic couple questions. Each of you may want to fill this out separately at first and then share your ideas. The answers will often pleasantly surprise with good things your partner remembers that you forgot, your many similarities and your quirky differences.

Then, bring your ideas together. Take your time as this sharing creates an important base for the discussion of your joint vision for your relationship. Together develop a blended vision that uses both your strengths. Create a vision that you can both be excited about implementing in a collaborative and encouraging way rather than nagging each other to change.

Okay, what works? Think of things that you do best as a couple. Are you good with money? What projects have you done together? What do you do together that is really fun for both of you? What do you like most about each other's personalities and habits? Do you split duties easily in the household? Do you have great sex? Share religious values? Treat each other with respect? Give each other lots of room to be who you are? Feel really safe with the other person? Never bored? Handle crises well? Can you talk about anything? If things are rough right now, look back on the beginning of the relationship. What worked best then? List as many things as you can.

What do you wish for? Use the list below to spark some ideas about what you picture for you, your couple relationship and your family.

- 1. Commitment and Trust:** How do you show commitment? What best represents commitment and trustworthiness to you?
- 2. Caring Gestures:** How do you show each other affection and caring? Which are most important to you and what do you like to do for your partner to show affection? (i.e. physical touching, kissing, back rubs, foot rubs, shoulder rubs, doing tasks and errands for your partner, spending time together, giving or receiving gifts and cards, offering compliments, talking together daily/weekly) What signals love to you?
- 3. Children:** How do you feel about having children? How do you feel supported as by your spouse with regard to parenting. How do you each approach parenting? How do you resolve differences?

4. **Cash:** How would you like to handle money? What attitudes do you share about money? How are your views different? Can you sum up your money philosophy and that of your partner in one line? (i.e. Spend less than you make. Spend it when you have it. Have a budget and follow it. A comfortable financial life is never having to have a budget. Make lots of money. Be frugal. Have more than those around you. Always pay the bills on time. Be generous.)
5. **Chores:** How would you divide chores and household tasks? What role do food and meals play in your marriage? How do you approach clutter? Laundry Housecleaning, Gardening, House/Car Maintenance, Household bookkeeping/phone calls/filing?
6. **Change:** (Adaptability to) How do you manage change? What is your attitude toward change? Cautious or Excited? Somewhere in between? Are you able to be flexible or adjust your standards when necessary?
7. **Clan:** What would you like your amount of contact and quality of relationships to be with family and friends? Are there times that you expect it to change?
8. **Conflict Resolution:** How well do you settle conflict? How well do each of you compromise or defer to each other depending on the significance of the issue? At the end of the day, do you try to put the value of the relationship ahead of any unresolved issues?
9. **Career and Meaning:** What is the role of work, career and volunteer efforts in your lives? How do you see it changing over time?
10. **Charity, Church and Spirituality:** How will these influence your lives and what part will they play?
11. **Celebrations and Holidays:** How do you like to celebrate and what will you want to celebrate?

What are your strengths as a couple now? What is the best thing about the two of you as a couple?

Share: Now exchange what you have written or read your answers to each other. Date them because it may be amusing to come back to them in later years. One of the interesting things about a good marriage is that it is constantly changing.

Couple Affirmation: Can you sum up what you both like and agree on as the heart of what you are becoming or want to become as a couple. Put it in the present tense as though it has already happened.

Some examples are: "We are a fun couple." "We are a problem solving team" "We can talk about anything." "We support each other." "We are deeply committed." "We can learn anything." "We can resolve anything." "We are constantly growing and changing together." "We manage money well." "We are devoted to our kids." "We value and appreciate each other." "We trust our couple." "Our couple relationship is our source of love and acknowledgement." "The magic is back." "We are a couple in Christ." "We are good in a crisis." "We are a winning team." "We have a good time when it is just the two of us." These are phrases that couples have used, especially during times of stress and conflict. The key is that the phrase has meaning to both of you. Know that your core couple affirmation can change over time.

The ideas for this were inspired by the work of Peter L. Sheras and Phyllis R. Sheras,