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IS YOUR CONNECTION AS STRONG AS IT COULD BE? 3 Ways to Tell



 **Colorado Center**
for Couples and Families

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Are You and Your Partner Feeling Disconnected From One Another?

Even if you and your partner have been together for only a few years, you may feel that your relationship has moved from a status of “intimate partners” to just “room mates”. This is a very common problem – one that I hear about often.

Think about it. You barely have time to go to work, shop for groceries, and keep your home in order, and if you have kids, you have even more demands on your time. With little quality time to spend together, it’s easy for you and your partner to feel that your lives are going in different directions. To make matters worse, you may each feel pulled by extended family, other friends, and different interests, to the point that you may even feel you have nothing in common anymore. You may have even reached a point in your relationship where you don’t feel supported by one another.

If This Sounds Familiar, Don’t Worry. There is Hope.

Even though you may feel estranged from one another, and perhaps you even feel hopeless, this state of relationship is quite common. In fact, it can even be used as a starting point to deepening intimacy between you and your partner. It is often when things become uncomfortable and disconnected that couples feel the motivation to take a closer look at their relationship. If you’re willing to invest in your relationship at this point, the attention you pay to it will pay off and could result in a deeper, more meaningful bond between you and your partner.

What If You Could Measure Your Level of Connection and Then Take Steps to Improve It?

Research shows that the stronger the bond you feel with your partner, the happier you are as an individual. And increasing the security of your bond pays off by decreasing depression and anxiety, and can help reduce symptoms of PTSD and other mental health related problems. In other words, deepen your bond with your partner, and your whole life can improve!

In a few minutes, I'll introduce you to a questionnaire that can be the beginning of charting a closer bond in your relationship. These are questions that you can answer yourself, or that your partner can answer, too. But before we get to the actual questionnaire, let me address something that you may be feeling: **FEAR.**

You May Be Afraid to Pay Closer Attention to Your Relationship. You May Wonder...

What if we find out that we're just too far-gone and it's hopeless?

If you are like most couples, even the unhappiest of couples, you have invested a lot of time and emotion into your partner and your relationship. If you CAN save the relationship, and if you CAN learn to come together again, the payoff is huge. Many couples who find a way to come back from the brink report that their relationship is stronger than it ever could have been had they never gotten to the brink in the first place. There are a myriad of reasons not to give up.

I'm afraid I'll find out that my partner doesn't really want to stay with me

If you and your partner are willing, at least, to answer questions about your relationship, that is usually a sign that you're both still invested enough to work toward making the relationship better. Besides that, the questions in this assessment tool are really about how supported YOU feel in your relationship, and how supported your partner feels by YOU. These questions are not about your motivation to change or stay or go.

I'm afraid to fully acknowledge how unsupported I feel in my relationship. It's easier to just ignore it.

If you feel really unsupported in your relationship, knowing that is a good first step. Your partner may be supportive, but not in a way that you want him/her to be. Wouldn't that be a great conversation to have?

My experience is that knowledge is power. The dance that you and your partner are dancing is happening anyway. You might as well become aware of your dance so that you can appreciate the strengths and address the weaknesses.

If you are apprehensive, you can each do this separately, and take your time in discussing it with each other.

Where is Your Relationship *Really* at Right Now?

Below is a quick questionnaire that can give you some indication of how strong your bond is and how safe each of you feels in the relationship *right now*. Keep in mind that this is not meant to be a critique of your partner. Rather it is an indication of the strength of your bond today and can help point you to the areas of your relationship with the most opportunity for growth.

Instructions: Read each statement and circle T for *true* or F for *false*. To score the questionnaire, give one point for each “true” answer. You can complete this questionnaire and reflect on your relationship on your own. Or you and your partner can each complete it and then discuss your answers together in the way described below the questionnaire.

From your viewpoint, is your partner <u>A</u> ccessible to you?	True/False
1. I can get my partner’s attention easily.	T F
2. My partner is easy to connect with emotionally.	T F
3. My partner shows me that I come first with him/her.	T F
4. I am not feeling lonely or shut out in this relationship.	T F
5. I can share my deepest feelings with my partner. He/she will listen.	T F
From your viewpoint, is your partner <u>R</u> esponsive to you?	True/False
1. If I need connection and comfort, my partner will be there for me.	T F
2. My partner responds to signals that I need him/her to come close.	T F
3. I find I can lean on my partner when I am anxious or unsure.	T F
4. Even when we fight or disagree, I know that I am important to my partner and we will find a way to come together.	T F

5. If I need reassurance about how important I am to my partner, I can get it.	T F
Are you positively emotionally <u>E</u>ngaged with each other?	True/False
1. I feel very comfortable being close to / trusting my partner.	T F
2. I can confide in my partner about anything.	T F
3. I feel confident, even when we are apart, that we are connected to each other.	T F
4. I know that my partner cares about my joys, hurts, and fears.	T F
5. I feel safe enough to take emotional risks with my partner.	T F

SCORE:

Add up the number of T's that you circled.

If you have scored 8 or above, you are well on your way to a secure bond. If you scored below 8, you are likely not feeling that you have a secure bond with your partner.¹

A therapist trained in EFT (Emotional Focused Therapy) can help you navigate what you discover with this assessment.

What Should You Do Now?

If you scored 7 or below on the questionnaire, you may be scared about what that means for your relationship. A good step forward would be to schedule a free consult with me to discuss the results of the questionnaire. Working with an EFT therapist can be incredibly beneficial for growing your relationship. An EFT

¹ This material is reprinted with permission from the book *Hold Me Tight: Seven Conversations for a Lifetime of Love*, By Dr. Sue Johnson, developer of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy, the most successful approach to building loving relationships.

therapist can bring perspective to help you through your challenge areas, and can help you build upon the bonds you do have.

Even if you scored high on this questionnaire, there is always a deeper bond you can have in your relationship. Working with an EFT therapist can help you and your partner build even more intimacy than you have currently.

To schedule a free consult, call me at 720-295-0760. We can address any issues that came up for you in the assessment, and can determine if we would work well together. I also encourage to visit my website, www.coloradocouples.com and check out some of my blog posts regarding numerous topics that may be of interest to you.

In the coming weeks, I'll send you some more information about how you can utilize what you find out about your level of connection by answering these questions.

Thanks and take care,

Jonathan Zalesne, MA, NCC

About the Author



Couples and Family Therapy is a second career for me. I had a successful and fulfilling career in Management Consulting for almost 25 years. My last “real job” was working for Oracle running a Business Process Management consulting group. I always knew that I would have two careers and that my second career would bring me closer to real people. In 2009, I faced down my fears and made the leap. I earned my Master’s degree in clinical counseling from the University of Northern Colorado and officially embarked on my journey to become a couples and family therapist. It has proved to be the best decision I have ever made. I love going to “work.” (I needed the quotes because sometimes it really doesn’t feel like work!)

I love working with couples and helping them move closer to each other. I love my new colleagues and working closely with them to become a better therapist every day. I even owe my relationship to this new field as I met my partner at an EFT training event. Yes – she is also a couples therapist. And a great one at that!

I have two incredible teenage kids – a 14-year-old son and 16-year-old daughter. I am very proud how my ex-wife and I are co-parenting our children. We have remained very close friends, and I count her husband as a friend as well. My kids love their stepsiblings, and I love them too. My daughter recently told me that she loves her life and wouldn’t change a thing. Now, that is pretty great coming from a 16-year-old girl!

For five weeks in the summer of 2013 my daughter and I walked the 500-mile Camino de Santiago – the entire width of Spain from France to the Ocean. The summer before that, my son and I backpacked 120 miles on the Colorado Trail from Denver to Breckenridge. We have committed to ourselves to finishing the rest of the 500-mile trail before he graduates from high school. I love walking, hiking and backpacking, and my not-so-secret dream is to hike the entire Pacific Coast Trail from Mexico to Canada.

I like that I did not start my counseling career at age 20. I am now completely energized by it, and I think my real life experience helps me relate to many of the clients I see. The best thing a client ever said to me was that I was the only therapist they had ever seen whom they felt they could be friends with in their real lives. I took that as a great compliment. I like that I don't come off as too new new-agey. I don't burn incense in my office, and I can relate to real people because I am pretty down-to-earth myself. But, I do take my work and therapy seriously.

When my ex-wife and I were going through divorce, we saw some pretty bad couples therapists. I often wonder what our outcome would have been had we worked with a really good EFT therapist – someone who actually knew how to work with couples. I work hard to be good at what I do because I think it is really important. No matter where you are in your relationship, if you want to make it better, so do I.

CONTACT

Click [HERE](#) to schedule an appointment

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