



Time for a Marriage Checkup?

By Bob Baker
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Have you had a medical checkup in the last year or two? An annual physical? Most Americans would answer these questions in the affirmative—or they would at least respond by saying that when they had a recent medical problem, they went to the doctor and sought help. The same would probably be reported about your car—or your dog—or your children. But.....have you recently had a 3,000-mile checkup on your marriage?

In general, the answer seems to be: not often enough. According to Paul McWilliams, who leads marriage workshops in Tehachapi, CA, research shows that the average couple waits six years before seeking help for marital problems. How many of us would wait six years to see a doctor to have some discomfort or pain checked out? Not many. Yet most of us are living with unhappiness for extended periods of time before seeking help at a workshop or seeking out a mentor, coach, pastor or counselor.

Contrary to fairly strong public opinion, that counseling does little good, McWilliams reports that 80% of people who go to counseling report that it is helpful. Our personal experience in leading marriage workshops and doing marital coaching indicates that “marriage tune-up” events and 4-5 coaching sessions provide measurable encouragement for 85% of those participating.

For those of you who need to start moving in the right direction right now, we would offer the following quiz to get you started in the right direction. This quiz, designed to measure whether there is enough love and respect in your marriage, was developed by John Gottman and modified by Ellen Connert. It should be taken by both you and your spouse, and we would suggest that you use it as a starting place for a dialogue designed to move your relationship forward. If it causes you to get “stuck,” then for sure you should seek out help.

Answer “yes” or “no” to each statement based on whether you mostly agree or disagree.

- 1. My spouse seeks out my opinions.***
- 2. My spouse cares about my feelings.***
- 3. We are affectionate toward one another.***
- 4. We listen to each other.***
- 5. What I say counts to my partner.***
- 6. I love spending time with my partner.***
- 7. We are very good friends.***
- 8. My spouse finds me physically attractive.***
- 9. I feel included in my partner's life.***
- 10. We touch each other a lot.***
- 11. We respect each other's ideas.***
- 12. Even during tough times, we can be empathetic.***

Scoring: If you checked “yes” to fewer than 4 items, then you probably do not feel enough love and respect in your marriage. If so, you may want to seek a checkup with a counselor or pastor. Also, you may want to consider registering for one of the many marriage workshops being offered by Rocky Mt. Family Council at www.rmfc.org (Click on Couple Connections). For information on marriage coaching, you may contact the author, Bob Baker, at 303-466-7150, or at Bob6068@aol.com.