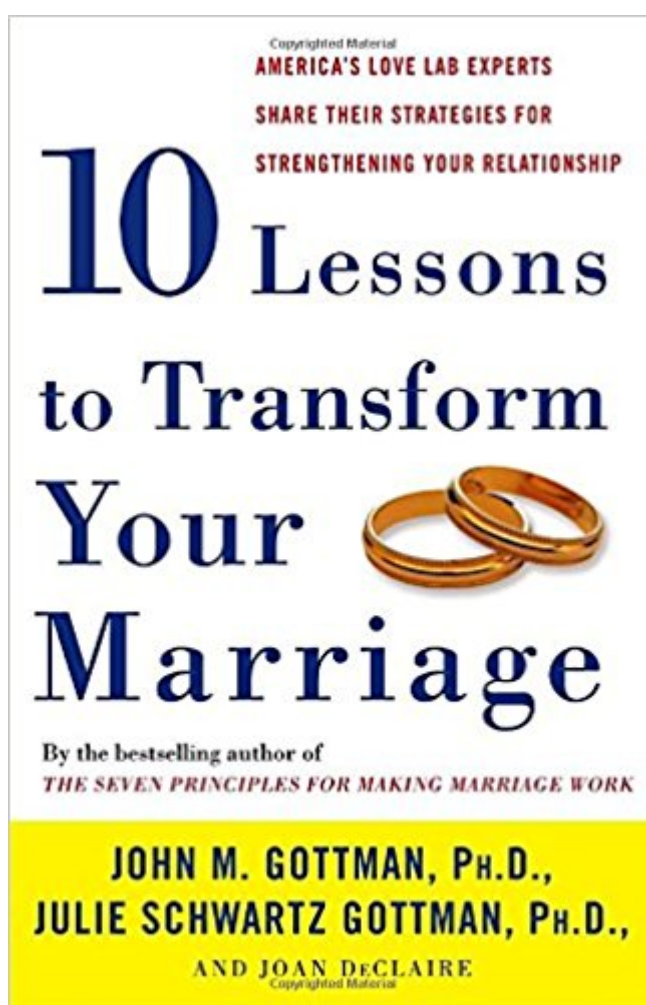


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# Ten Lessons To Transform Your Marriage: America's Love Lab Experts Share Their Strategies For Strengthening Your Relationship



## Synopsis

In *Ten Lessons to Transform Your Marriage*, marital psychologists John and Julie Gottman provide vital tools—scientifically based and empirically verified—that you can use to regain affection and romance lost through years of ineffective communication. In 1994, Dr. John Gottman and his colleagues at the University of Washington made a startling announcement: Through scientific observation and mathematical analysis, they could predict—with more than 90 percent accuracy—whether a marriage would succeed or fail. The only thing they did not yet know was how to turn a failing marriage into a successful one, so Gottman teamed up with his clinical psychologist wife, Dr. Julie Schwartz Gottman, to develop intervention methods. Now the Gottmans, together with the Love Lab research facility, have put these ideas into practice. What emerged from the Gottmans'™ collaboration and decades of research is a body of advice that's™ based on two surprisingly simple truths: Happily married couples behave like good friends, and they handle their conflicts in gentle, positive ways. The authors offer an intimate look at ten couples who have learned to work through potentially destructive problems—extramarital affairs, workaholism, parenthood adjustments, serious illnesses, lack of intimacy—and examine what they've™ done to improve communication and get their marriages back on track. Hundreds of thousands have seen their relationships improve thanks to the Gottmans'™ work. Whether you want to make a strong relationship more fulfilling or rescue one that's™ headed for disaster, *Ten Lessons to Transform Your Marriage* is essential reading. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

John M. Gottman, Ph.D., and Julie Schwartz Gottman, Ph.D., are the founders and directors of the Gottman Institute and the Relationship Research Institute in Seattle. The bestselling author of *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* and *The Relationship Cure*, among other books, John Gottman is a professor of psychology, an elected fellow of the American Psychological Association, and the recipient of numerous awards and commendations. His research and findings have been featured in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, the bestselling book *Blink*, and in the broadcast media. Julie Schwartz Gottman established the Gottman Institute's Marriage Clinic and serves as its clinical director. A clinical psychologist, she is in private practice in Seattle, where she and John live. Joan DeClaire is a writer specializing in psychology, health, and family issues. From the Hardcover edition.

Introduction From *Predicting Divorce to Preventing It: An Introductory Message from John and Julie Gottman* It's been more than a decade since John and his colleagues at the University of Washington (UW) first announced their discovery: Through the power of careful observation and mathematical analysis, the team had learned to predict with more than 90 percent accuracy whether a married couple would stay together or eventually divorce. This discovery captured the imagination of many. If research psychologists could now pinpoint specific behaviors that lead to divorce, then perhaps people in troubled relationships could change those behaviors and save their marriages. But as any weatherman can tell you, the ability to predict trouble is not the same as the ability to prevent it. It's one thing to detect a storm brewing on radar; it's quite another to make those storm clouds disappear. And yet that's the kind of work we at the Gottman Institute have been doing. Since 1994 we've been developing tools to help couples identify problems that are proven to destroy relationships and to turn those problems around. By experimenting with various forms of therapy, we've been learning how to help husbands and wives improve their marriages and prevent divorce. Through our workshops, therapy sessions, and books, couples are gaining the tools they need to build stronger friendships and manage their conflicts. As a result, they are learning to work through a whole host of problems common to marriage—problems such as these: • the stress of caring for a new baby • exhaustion from working too hard • loss of interest in sex and romance • health problems • recovering from an extramarital affair • struggles with depression • arguments over housework and finances • changes that come with retirement • the loss of a job, an identity, or a lifelong dream And once again we're achieving some exciting results. Our studies show that 86 percent of people who complete our marriage workshops

say they make significant progress on conflicts that once felt "gridlocked." And after one year, 75 percent of husbands and 56 percent of wives who attend our workshops and therapy sessions feel their marriages move from a broken state to a functional one. Even simply reading our books can make a difference. One study showed that 63 percent of husbands and wives who read John's 1999 bestseller, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, reported that their marriages had changed for the better and were still improved a year later. These numbers are a big improvement over other forms of marital intervention. For example, acclaimed marriage researcher Neil Jacobson conducted an evaluation of one of the most highly regarded therapy methods and showed that only 35 percent of couples using it improved their marriages. What's behind our success? We believe it's the science. The tools we've developed—and that you'll see real couples using in this book—are not based on our beliefs or whims about marriage. They are grounded in decades of work John and his colleagues have been doing at the Family Research Laboratory, originally located at UW and now part of our Relationship Research Institute in Seattle. The Love Lab—as we've come to call it—is a research facility where husbands and wives are screened, interviewed, and observed interacting with each other. Researchers use video cameras, heart monitors, and other biofeedback equipment to determine people's stress levels during conversations with their partners. This information is then coded and mathematically analyzed. By collecting and analyzing such data on thousands of couples—and tracking their progress over time—we've learned an enormous amount about the dynamics of marriage. And, ultimately, we've been able to determine which interactions lead to lasting happiness, and which interactions lead to emotional distance and divorce. In the bestselling book *Blink* (Little Brown, 2005), journalist Malcolm Gladwell refers to our process as "thin slicing." Simply put, this means we're able to quickly determine a great deal of information about a couple from analyzing a very thin slice of data collected in one short lab session. The reason our swift analysis works is because each thin slice of data is actually grounded in a tremendous amount of "thick slicing"—i.e., huge volumes of data that we've been collecting and validating on thousands of other couples for more than thirty years. To help everyday couples use these discoveries to improve their own marriages, we established the Gottman Institute, which provides therapy and workshops for husbands and wives, as well as training for marriage therapists. Combining John's extensive research findings with Julie's thirty years of experience as a clinical psychologist, we've developed a body of advice that's based on two surprisingly simple truths: 1. Happily married couples behave like good friends. In other words, their relationships are characterized by respect, affection, and empathy. They pay close attention to what's happening in each other's life and

they feel emotionally connected. One of John's studies of couples discussing conflict demonstrated this well. It showed that spouses in happy, stable marriages made five positive remarks for every one negative remark when they were discussing conflict. In contrast, couples headed for divorce offered less than one (0.8) positive remark for every single negative remark.

2. Happily married couples handle their conflicts in gentle, positive ways. They recognize that conflict is inevitable in any marriage, and that some problems never get solved, never go away. But these couples don't get gridlocked in their separate positions. Instead, they keep talking with each other about conflicts. They listen respectfully to their spouses' perspectives and they find compromises that work for both sides. With this book, we give you an intimate view of ten couples who learned to work through serious problems that were threatening their marriages—problems like infidelity, overwork, adjustment to parenthood, unresolved anger and resentment, and a loss of interest in sex. You'll learn a bit about each couple's background and how they perceived the problems they brought to the Love Lab. You'll also read parts of the conversations that occurred when we asked husbands and wives to talk to each other about their problems. For each couple, we present two dialogues, one that took place before we counseled them and one that happened after they heard our advice. In addition, you'll see a commentary alongside each dialogue titled "What We Noticed." This gives you a therapist's perspective on the interaction so that you might learn to detect some of the most common stumbling blocks that occur in relationships. You may notice, for example, places where a few words spoken in haste can take a conversation—and a marriage—down a dangerous path. You may learn to spot behaviors proven by John's research to damage relationships. These include a set of particularly poisonous patterns of interaction we call "the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse." Our studies have shown that, left unchecked, these behaviors can send couples into a downward spiral that ends in divorce. The Four Horsemen are:

- \*Criticism. Often, criticism appears as a complaint or episode of blaming that's coupled with a global attack on your partner's personality or character. Criticism frequently begins with "you always" or "you never."
- \*Defensiveness. These are the counterattacks people use to defend their innocence or avoid taking responsibility for a problem. Defensiveness often takes the form of cross-complaining or whining.
- \*Contempt. This is criticism bolstered by hostility or disgust. Think of somebody rolling their eyes while you're trying to tell them something important about yourself. Contempt often involves sarcasm, mocking, name-calling, or belligerence.
- \*Stonewalling. This happens when listeners withdraw from the conversation, offering no physical or verbal cues that they're affected by what they hear. Interacting with somebody who does this is like talking to a stone wall.

Our commentary also indicates the

places where these couples make great stridesâi.e., where they say or do something that strengthens the relationship by making them feel closer, encouraging compromise, or healing old wounds. Examples of such positive behaviors include

- \*Softened start-up. This is the ability to start talking about a complaint or a problem gently, without criticizing or insulting your partner. When one spouse does this, the other is more willing to listen, making compromise possible.
- \*Turning toward your partner. Close relationships consist of a series of âemotional bidsâ that is, your partner reaches out for emotional connection with a comment, a question, a smile, or a hug. You can choose to 1. turn away, ignoring the bid 2. turn against, reacting with anger or hostility 3. turn toward, showing youâre open, listening, and engaged

Our research shows that habitually turning away or turning against your partnerâs bids harms your marriage. But consistently turning toward your partner strengthens emotional bonds, friendship, and romance.

- \*Repairing the conversation. This is an effort to de-escalate negative feelings during a difficult encounter. A repair can be an apology, a smile, or bit of humor that breaks the tension and helps you both feel more relaxed.
- \*Accepting influence. Partners who are open to persuasion from each other generally have stronger, happier marriages. Being stubborn or domineering has just the opposite effect. Our studies show that a husbandâs willingness to accept influence from his wife can be particularly helpful to forming a strong, happy marriage. Such concepts may seem familiar to people who have read Johnâs previous books or attended our workshops. The difference with this book is that it invites you right into the Love Lab. Reading it, you spend time with ten couples who agreed to let us share their stories so that the work we did together might also help others. (For privacy, weâve used fictional names and changed some identifying characteristics, but the situations and the conversations youâll read are real.) Unlike books that simply tell you how to change your marriage, this book actually shows you how that transformation happensâhow real couples talking about truly difficult problems can change the dynamics of their conversations; how they can stop having the same painful, destructive interactions over and over again and move on to a more peaceful coexistence. You see how they take the tools we suggest and use them to build back that sense of affection and romance that attracted them to each other in the first place. In addition, each chapter provides quizzes you can take to see if you and your partner face the same problems these couples are overcoming. And we offer exercises you can do to make the same kind of progress these couples do. As you read about these couplesâ progress, you may notice that many of the changes they make are small, simple adjustmentsânot big, complicated ones. A husband may, for example, learn to ask his wife more questions about how sheâs feeling. Or a wife may learn to express more appreciation for all the work her husbandâs been doing. We might advise a couple

to stop and take a break to calm down when theyâ™re in the middle of a heated discussion. Or we might give them strategies for going to a deeper level in their conversations, sharing their hopes and dreams. While the changes we suggest may not always seem like a big deal, our research shows that small, positive behaviors, frequently repeated, can make a big difference in the long-term success of a marriage. You could compare this work to piloting a plane cross-country. A turn of a few degrees over Ohio may seem like a small adjustmentâ™merely fine-tuning. But in the long run it determines whether you end up in San Francisco or Los Angeles. So it is with a long-term relationship. When both partners commit to making small but consistently positive shifts in their interactions, they can take their marriage to a much happier place. Whether youâ™re currently in a distressed relationship or you simply want to make a strong, happy relationship even better, we believe this book can help. It will show you what itâ™s like to work with an effective therapist to improve your marriage. And it will also give you insights and tools you can use to make progress with or without counseling. We hope that as you read this book, you find it comforting that youâ™re not alone in your desire to make marriage better; that the challenges you and your partner may face are not insurmountable. And donâ™t be surprised if you recognize yourselves in the situations and dialogues that follow. Our work has shown us that every couple is unique, but we also see many, many similarities. And thatâ™s a great sign that we can all learn from one another. Best wishes, John and Julie Gottman  
From the Hardcover edition.

Simple yet "deep". The conversations make it very lively and realistic, the quizzes are great thought provoking-emotion-triggering-conversation-promoting devices. Thank you

Highly recommend this book. It has helped my relationship leaps and bounds. The advice seems simple but most people don't do it.

Extremely well explained points for the couples. Very good framework for all.

Great lessons, if you do them and follow through....

I use this book in my psychotherapy practice to introduce the Gottman's and their research. Of the many Gottman books I feel this to be a very good lay persons intro.

Seller was great. Book was meh...

Anything from John Gottman on marriage, relationships, partnerships and conflict from awareness to resolution is excellent. one needs to be aware, and then take the prescribed steps. His recommendations do work - if followed.

Good read

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