

## **COUPLES CONVERSATION**

### **Addressing Issues, Choices and Opportunities**

**by Ruth M. Schimel, Ph.D., Career & Life Management Consultant**

As you create greater clarity and commitment about how you want to lead your life and what you want to do, communicating with significant others becomes even more essential. These conversations with anyone whose life may be affected by your choices and decisions will also help you refine what's important to discuss now and explore future directions. Mutually beneficial and acceptable outcomes will then be more likely. (Of possible use: *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most* by Stone, Patton, and Heen.)

Furthermore, ongoing communication, especially about possibly uncomfortable matters can avoid repetition of unproductive patterns and outcomes. You'll hear your own voice better and open opportunities to consider different perspectives and ideas. The process could also limit sour surprises and misunderstandings.

Choose among the topics below for preparation and discussion to guide you in clarifying concerns and choices as well as to provide opportunities for mutual support and collaboration. Check relevant options and add your own ideas.

Ideally, share this guide for making a list of topics to address together. Alternatively, do a simple list of main, specific topics to provide when you discuss a time and place for conversation.

1. What main ideas or visions for the next several years shall we explore?
2. What possible changes in our current way of living would these choices suggest? Topics may include work, family, pleasure, financial resources, housing, and community. Other considerations could include location, health, spiritual practice, learning, and friends.
3. Since time and energy will not permit discussing everything at once, what are the one or two most important matters to discuss now? How shall we schedule discussion of the remaining ones?
4. Since agreed-upon change often brings new opportunities for development, what specifically can we address to improve the quality of our lives together now.
5. What issues and practical matters related to differing interests and needs may get in the way of accomplishing the main goals we choose for the present?
6. How can mutual benefit be found in these issues and matters, as they relate to us together or independently?

For each person's additional consideration and preparation jot down below:

- What is the most significant issue for my partner?
  
- What is the most significant issue for me?
  
- What specific needs and preferences of my partner can I anticipate?
  
- As you wish, think about the following additional themes in advance, adding your own ideas on the lines provided:
  - timing and regularity of conversations
  - matters and habits to avoid
  - most important topic to address now
  - incentives for follow through for you and your partner
  - patterns, issues and tendencies that could block progress now
  - how to transcend blocking patterns, tendencies and issues, now and later
  - crucial matters that may benefit from third-party facilitation
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_

**Do not use the guide for commercial purposes. For other uses, obtain Ruth's permission in advance.**

© 2016. Ruth M. Schimel, Ph.D., Career & Life Management Consultant.  
 202.659.1772 [www.ruthschimel.com](http://www.ruthschimel.com) [ruth@ruthschimel.com](mailto:ruth@ruthschimel.com)