

# Accelerate Your Progress

Set Goals- Learn new skills- Stay Focused- Practice- Get Results.

Basically when you feel pain, you want relief as fast as possible. You're wired to relieve non-chosen pain.

When you feel relationship pain, you want relief and usually that means your partner doing something different.

When in relationship pain, the most common phrase is "I need ..." and that generally means my partner needs to be different.

Of course, if your partner changes you could feel better. However, that is only one half the picture.

The other half? You guessed it: how you can improve yourself.

The following goal setting information will liberate you from repeating painful patterns by giving you the greatest leverage.

## **Goals come in different categories**

**Results goals** – for example, you want to lose 10 pounds. There is no statement about how to make it happen. The goal is getting the result.

**Process goals** – the focus is on changing the way you do something vs seeking a specific result. For example, "I want to be more respectful and listen better when you are upset."

## **Two ways to improve your relationship:**

1. You change
2. Your partner changes

## **Ways you can change**

This is the category of self-improvement. For example, you may want to be more assertive, more organized, more transparent with your emotions, take risks to get closer, be curious instead of furious, etc. We usually take on self-improvement goals after trying everything else.

Probably the most common dynamic in couple's therapy is each partner putting most of the focus on how the partner needs to change. So let's tackle this first.

### **Partner changes**

The first step is identifying (in a measurable way) one thing you want your partner to improve. Saying you want them to be more respectful, nicer, neater, supportive, adoring or be a better listener is too vague. It is not specific and is not measurable.

If you are not clear about specific and measurable ways for your partner to change, we can create that clarity in the office.

The next step is speculating how difficult (and why) it will be for your partner to respond to what you want in a timely and effective manner. Basically this is a question of how well you really know and understand your partner. On a 1-10 scale, how difficult do you think it will be for your partner to give you what you want?

But you are not yet done. Now you need to describe how you will make it easier for your partner to respond to you. Although a lot of people think it is sufficient to describe what they want and then sit back and wait for the miracle, it is mostly wishful thinking. If your partner doesn't want encouragement, consider yourself lucky. Very lucky.

### **Changing yourself**

Now comes the emotionally hard part. Setting a goal for yourself that will be meaningful (and measurable) for your partner. If you set an improvement

goal for yourself and you feel no resistance it is not a stretch for you. And it is probably not very meaningful for your partner.

Next, you may desire some form of encouragement from your partner to change. If so what would it be?

The next two questions deal with motivation. What are the benefits for you and your partner for following through with your self-improvement goal?

Why would this goal for you be difficult to carry out? Good news. One of my jobs will be to help make it easier for you to follow through on meaningful goals you set for yourself.

Experience has taught me that the first meaningful change in a relationship comes from each person identifying his or her own self-improvement goals. This increases your partner's motivation to continue their own self change.

So in that spirit complete the following questions.

The first meaningful change I will make for the sake of an improved relationship is

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However this won't be easy for me because

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But the benefits will be

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The encouragement I would like from my partner is

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If I knew (skill set, or tools, or more information about my partner or myself, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_ it could make my change easier

After your self-change has been implemented and practiced, it becomes infinitely easier to request your partner to make a change. Unfortunately most couples focus on partner change first and self-change second. But we will focus on self-improvement first. Our future efforts will become easier and set the foundation for better teamwork.