

Simplifying a Successful Relationship  
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## **Simplifying a Successful Relationship: The Intimacy Love and Dating Scale**

Attracting and maintaining a lasting and loving relationship is perhaps one of the foremost goals in our lives. Why do some individuals have close, compatible marriages for decades, while other individuals experience the frustration of poor relationships or of living the single life for years? For answers, Jessica offers you: The Intimacy, Love, and Dating Scale.

*The ability to recognize* a “wise choice” for a lifetime partner will put you ahead of most people searching for a happier life. Today we are going to talk about how to make wise choices in finding a lasting partner and the key steps to keep this relationship alive.

For instance, when you begin a new relationship, you likely use one of two techniques to make your “yes/no” decisions. You may use your *emotional* feelings to accept a date, or rely on your *mental* reasoning to pursue an encounter or introduction. If your emotional and intellectual perceptions are in balance, you are likely to do well on The Intimacy, Love and Dating Scale. However, if these perceptions are out of balance, this “tool” can help you recognize why a relationship doesn’t get off the ground, is in trouble, or has failed.

### **The Intimacy , Love and Dating Scale:**

ATTENTION  
INCLUSION  
AFFECTION  
TRUST  
CARING  
COMMITMENT  
LOVE IS NOW PARTNERSHIP

#### **(I) ATTENTION**

Getting a person’s ATTENTION is the initial phase of attracting a potential partner. Perhaps you have decided to meet through a dating service, a blind date, family introduction, or a night out to dance and mingle.

First impressions are critically important. ATTENTION involves the first glance, the first conversation, and the first spark of attraction. Did he/she respond positively, or appear bored? Did you have a lot to talk about, or was the conversation strained? Did he/she seem to like you more than you liked them (or vice-versa)? Were you trying too hard because you were nervous, or was the conversation easy? Was his/her money and physical appearance more important than personality?

If your emotional gut feelings conflict with your intellectual perceptions, my advice to you is to be cautious and simply move on. If you chose to accept inconsistent feelings or actions, most likely you will attract and accept inconsistent relationships. The goal is to attract a rewarding, long term relationship, and not settle for less.

Get clear that there's not only "one fish in the sea." You have dating choices no matter how old you are, your gender, race, religion, or upbringing.

Have you arranged for a second meeting with a new potential partner? If you have, hopefully you will choose not to become too overly physical or sexually intimate early in your relationship. Take time in getting to know this new person. Try not to divulge about your past too soon if you are going through an emotional or difficult transition in your life. You don't want to push away a potential partner.

To build a loving relationship, you want to be genuine and real. Is your new date doing the same with you? What have you found in common? If you have some differences, can these dissimilarities compliment your life or uplift your personal weaknesses?

## **(II) INCLUSION**

INCLUSION is a wonderful and exciting next step. This is what most relationship coaches and counselors refer to as "The Honeymoon Stage." It is closely allied with stage (IV), that of developing mutual trust and day to day ease.

If all goes well, you feel comfortable to begin sharing your aspirations, goals, and needs easily and effortlessly. You begin talking about your work, friends, family, and past experiences. You want to know everything about each other to bring you closer and feel more compatible. You are being your best self, and they are being the same with you. You begin talking on a daily or weekly basis, and you enjoy getting to know each other. Each conversation makes you feel better about growing the relationship with your potential partner.

During the INCLUSION stage of getting to know each other, you discover if your goals match: financially, socially, spiritually, physically, and emotionally. Also, you will discover if your goals regarding family and children are harmonious.

Make sure to cover all aspects of your quirks (in a good way) and similarities during this stage.

In getting to know each other, what stands out about the other person that makes you feel comfortable and enjoy your time together? Do you feel safe, valued, and empowered? Do their past experiences compliment where you want to go in your life? Does he/she side-step questions or respond to what you asked? If you presented the same question three different ways, are their answers consistent?

If you can continue to have great conversations and your attraction for each other increases, you will be prepared to take the next step.

*Here are some questions to ask yourself:*

- \_\_\_\_\_ Does your new boyfriend/girlfriend respect you?
- \_\_\_\_\_ What things do you find in common with each other that spark new ideas and things to do together?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Has your new boyfriend/girlfriend introduced you to their best friends and closest family members?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Can you be yourself with this individual?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Does he/she consider your needs and desires as a priority?
- \_\_\_\_\_ What talks have you had to begin planning longer-term goals?
- \_\_\_\_\_ How much fun are you having in planning future things to do together?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Is your new companion dating you exclusively?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Do you enjoy your conversations so much that you feel like you are sharing with your best friend?

Many people mistake early stages of INCLUSION as true love. If this mistake occurs in your relationship, you will most likely watch your relationship slowly slip away. INCLUSION means that you are getting to know each other, and wisely doing so in an easy and comfortable manner. During the INCLUSION stage, men and women often let themselves “fall in love,” when in fact, they are simply infatuated with this new face and personality.

INCLUSION is the stage many relationships fall apart. Infatuation turns slowly into what one may feel is love (which results from behaving as if truly in love),

while the other person is still back in INCLUSION. This creates an unbalanced relationship where one person may care more than the other. Whoever cares more usually loses. The person who loves least is in control.

If there is an unbalanced relationship, the person who is not as involved will likely either “use,” keep at a distance, or ultimately drop their new partner.

For instance, it is usually at this point the man backs off if the woman develops “puppy love eyes” too soon or introduces unexpected “baggage.” It is the woman who backs off if the man is too forward, has “previous-relationship-issues,” or acts needy. There may be other reasons for a pull-back, but the point is, without going through the full stages of INCLUSION, a possible relationship can fall away.

Many women skip INCLUSION (II) and move straight from ATTENTION (I) to CARING (V) and PHYSICAL PASSION (VI). They are sexually active on the first, second, or third date, and assume that their partner will suddenly “fall madly in love with them” as a result of having “made love.” Then wishful thinking can take over and intellectual logic is tossed out the door. If sex is introduced too soon, the balance of emotion and intellect is upset, and couples stop seeing each other as they truly are.

Realize sensuality and being sexually active are different. If you want to have a loving, enduring, and lasting relationship, you can be sensual, but *know* your partner well enough so that he/she will want to stay with you after making love.

The step of INCLUSION, that is, getting to know each other, is crucial. When you both can fully be yourselves and the relationship continues to deepen, the next step of the Intimacy, Love, and Dating Scale is that of AFFECTION.

(Author’s note) When I met my husband twenty-four years ago, through an introduction, he made my heart sing. We spent hours talking and getting to know each other. He was my perfect match. By including each other into our lives, I got to know his three children, understand changes in his career, and realize we could build a solid life together. But I took my time using the INCLUSION step so that the challenges in front of us would not diminish our communication or attraction. Today, our love continues to deepen and grow.

### **(III) AFFECTION**

As you enter this stage not only do you see the positive traits of your boyfriend/girlfriend, but you also notice their frailties, faults, and weaknesses. The good news is that your partner has seen your flaws, too, but you are still attracted to each other. You have both decided to keep moving the relationship

forward and help each other be your “best self” and assist one another’s growth process.

AFFECTION is a pivotal point where you can feel safe enough to process personal issues and break through past set-backs or fears. You happily invite your partner to be a part of your life. If he /she is unwilling to support your growth, then you have not reached the stage of AFFECTION.

The “Honeymoon Stage” is over, and now a feeling of long-term commitment begins. You realize you really like the other person, and he/she feels the same about you.

You’ve successfully maneuvered through disagreements, misunderstandings, and frustrations and these events have actually brought you closer together.

Your talk of commitment gets deeper, more complex, and genuinely authentic. By now, you have decided you don’t want to lose your partner. And fortunately, your companion doesn’t want to be without you.

However, be aware of a common mistake that occurs during this stage of relationship development. Love can be a very complex feeling. If your AFFECTION is fostered by a deep need for financial security, social status, child rearing, emotional bolstering, sexual discovery, and the like, the developed closeness can fall away if your partner cannot fully meet your expectations.

The point is, you need to feel whole and complete in yourself and believe in your partner so that neither of you put unreasonable demands on each other. If a job goes away, or a level of social standing is diminished, or a child becomes disruptive, or sex gets rote, how can you bring joy into the relationship and better communication so that love grows and doesn’t fall away? If you truly believe in your partner and can get through the tough times together, a deeper love occurs. If you hope that your partner will rescue you, this is a fragile foundation for a relationship. Your partner may not want to take on this responsibility and leave you for someone who is secure in his/herself. Or, the relationship can enter a cycle of push/pull, a cycle that ultimately may lead to a troubled future.

As a final thought, if you have been physically intimate in the early stages of AFFECTION, without a sense of commitment, your chance of this relationship failing is high.

#### **(IV) TRUST**

There are three levels of TRUST. They are:

- A. Trust with your feelings.

- B. Trust with your material belongings.
- C. Trust with your friends, family, children, co-workers, and acquaintances.

### **A. TRUST WITH YOUR FEELINGS.**

After you have reached a sense of AFFECTION and developed the early stages of commitment, you enter more deeply into the TRUST phase, commonly known as the “Trust Zone.”

If this phase is compromised, your relationship cannot mature and it will splinter apart or repeat initial stages, cycling through them again and again eventually falling apart with the unresolved TRUST issues.

During the AFFECTION stage, you shared your strengths and weaknesses, and grew stronger in your relationship. With deepening TRUST comes the agreement that your relationship is of primary importance. New priorities are set, both individually and as a couple.

Even if a boss, parent, sibling, child, friend, or stranger creates a disturbance in your relationship, this type of trust (feelings) means your partner comes first. You TRUST that your partner has clarity, compassion, and awareness to help the two of you through the “moment.”

As this TRUST grows, you know your partner values you and your opinions. You feel safe with your partner’s ideas, insights, and suggestions. Your mutual actions are consistently based on respect and appreciation for each other. You know your partner will be there for you because your communication is easy, dependable, and trustworthy. TRUST develops when words are backed by positive follow-through. If you can develop this level of trust, your relationship will deepen.

If you feel unsure or insecure due to the thoughts and actions of your partner, your feelings will lead you to not trust this person. If you cannot get past your uneasy feelings, it is likely you will fall out of love and your relationship will fall apart.

### **B. TRUST WITH YOUR MATERIAL BELONGINGS.**

One of the most important issues couples encounter is TRUST with their material belongings. Often, new lovers will share their car, home, stereo, keys, credit cards, etc., when they are still in the INCLUSION (II) or AFFECTION (III) stage. If this sharing stage is entered too soon, disappointment can result for to one or both parties in the relationship. During the early stages of the Intimacy, Love and Dating Scale, if you are overly emotional or supportive in sharing your belongings time and caring, you can set yourself up to be used. *Takers feed on givers.*

Expectations get mired into old conversations that are not necessarily accurate. The giver wants to pull back. The receiver wants more. The relationship falls apart.

*Ask Yourself:*

- \_\_\_\_\_ Can you trust your future financial stability with your new partner?
- \_\_\_\_\_ If he/she is wealthy, is the love you have more important than the wealth?
- \_\_\_\_\_ If he/she is financially and materially driven, will this be an issue in the future?
- \_\_\_\_\_ How does your partner show respect and care for the items that are yours?
- \_\_\_\_\_ When your partner talks about how you can become more financially secure together, does he/she sound controlling or patronizing?
- \_\_\_\_\_ If he/she had a previous relationship/marriage how were the material items divided? Equally or winner-takes-all?

If your respective long-term financial goals are incompatible, or if your concepts of wealth conflict, then the relationship quite likely is going to fail. In my experience of consulting with couples in this area, money issues top the list of reasons for divorce (next to issues about sex and raising children).

It is imperative you maintain a high level of TRUST in your relationship if you are to enjoy a lasting, loving union.

### **C. TRUST WITH YOUR FRIENDS, FAMILY, CHILDREN, CO-WORKERS AND ACQUAINTANCES.**

An important point to remember is that when you enter into a relationship you take on having new people in your life besides your partner. Your partner comes "with" friends, family, maybe children, co-workers and acquaintances. Essentially, you take on his/her "web of people." How you fit-in? Are you comfortable? Is it easy and delightful? Or, is the communication strained or uncomfortable?

How does your partner act around these people and how does he/she include you?

*Ask yourself:*

\_\_\_\_\_ Is being with his/her network of people fun, fulfilling, and supportive ?

\_\_\_\_\_ Do I trust these people to support me today and in the future?

\_\_\_\_\_ Do I trust my partner with my social group and family?

\_\_\_\_\_ Is my life bettered through knowing these individuals?

## **(V) CARING**

CARING is a wonderful phase in a maturing relationship. In this step you are ready to add CARING to INCLUSION, AFFECTION, and TRUST. This stage is the awareness that if you lost your new love, you would be devastated. Not remorse due to fear of financial loss, fear of starting over, or losing social status. Rather, you realize, this person in your life knows you better than anyone else and vice-versa. Their presence, support, personality, and companionship adds substantially to your life.

This feeling is not only awesome but also irreplaceable. You adjust to the ebbs and flows of your relationship as you accommodate to each other because their well-being is of utmost importance. With this person in your life, all sorts of new things seem possible because you have shared dreams and goals. You're a building a long term future together: You can tell each other anything and life gets better. You constantly think of making each other's day better because this feels good and brings you closer.

Disagreements, set-backs, angst, and disappointment are a part of any relationship, but not a cause for ending it. In your CARING, you have decided that each of you (and any children involved), can overcome challenges.

You both have committed to face life's difficulties together and you believe in one another to get to the other side. This stage is one in which you have been dating seriously and are talking about a lifetime commitment.

Here is where Commitment Phobics usually pull back (if they haven't done so already). The term, "Dance-Away-Lover" aptly applies. No specific reasons are necessarily given because it is *commitment* that feels too stifling.

Commitment Phobics are relationship addicts who enjoy and indulge in the stages of infatuation and "the chase" pretending to set "roots" but don't follow through. Hopefully you haven't spent seven or ten years discovering you have a dance-away-partner.

Sadly, many, have reached this stage and watched relationships crumble. The signs were available, but there was always a reason to stay, forgive, or start over

the Intimacy, Love and Dating Scale, always hoping to get through to a long term commitment. Somewhere along the way, your *emotional* or *rational* goals were compromised, allowing you to continually try to re-invent the relationship.

Commitment Phobics are masters at keeping you in a push-pull cycle. The closer the two of you get, the more the Commitment Phobic backs off, but as distance is reinstated, he/she comes closer to repeat the cycle.

With CARING you become closer as you touch, kiss, and embrace. TRUST with your physical body is the most overlooked phase and the least understood step to developing a truly loving and caring relationship.

Today it is fairly common for a single woman to feel that if they do not have sex by their third or fourth date, their gentleman suitor will move on. Also, single men commonly say, "If I haven't had sex by the third or fourth date, I'm in the "friend zone." Both of these assumptions have created havoc in the dating scene, by creating pressure to have sex early in the relationship, rather than waiting for the stages of intimacy to develop. Overlooking the INCLUSION, TRUST, and CARING stages means the individual is moving from ATTRACTION to physical intimacy without thinking about the consequences.

Sex with a relatively new stranger is your choice. However, with each of these decisions comes the possibility of acquiring a broken heart and complete lack of communication with your partner. Be aware that by moving into an intimate relationship prior to developing common ground, you've gone for the *emotional* side of the relationship equation, not the *rational* view.

The Intimacy, Love and Dating Scale advocates not moving so fast sexually, but if this is your preference, good luck with your results. Doing so (moving fast), attracts a 90+% failure rate for those looking for a meaningful relationship. The hit-and-run lover doesn't care about you.

The Intimacy, Love and Dating Scale defines truly rewarding sex as the deeper level of communication and understanding most call, "making love." You can only "make love," when you truly are caring for each other, giving to each other and – you KNOW each other. Otherwise, be aware – you're just having sex. This isn't a way to develop a "soul mate" relationship.

Sharing loving intimate passion after having traveled this far through the Intimacy, Love and Dating Scale, without skipping the previously mentioned steps, is often indescribable. Souls seem to intertwine, and time stops.

You realize that your partner means so much to you; that you can hardly wait to spend the next day together. Sexual intimacy with a loved partner never grows old. You want to keep this passion alive with this wonderful partner.

Now, intimacy bonds you closer and closer every time you are together or even think about each other. And if you learn to keep this TRUST alive, it fuels you to continually add to your relationship's depth, meaning and growth. You feel as if God moves through you, the person you love, and the people you share your lives with.

## **(VI) COMMITMENT**

This is the stage when the question of marriage is no longer a concern. You can hardly wait to be married. A total commitment to each other is a primary desire. Whether you choose to wait for marriage to have sex is up to you – this is a personal issue (and for many, a religious value.)

This is when you realize life gets better through marriage and blending your lives. Marriage is not only exciting but opens new doors of opportunity for your choices, dreams, and plans. Not only do you create and build logical goals, but also your emotional needs are satisfied.

It is very rare that this stage falls apart. By now you know each other, your motivations, needs, wants, and frailties. Life becomes the experience of sharing openly and negotiating the differences that arise in ways that respect and satisfy both of you.

## **(VII) LOVE IS NOW PARTNERSHIP**

Love is no longer learning the steps of relationship. You have both formed a comfortable partnership where your sense of well-being and joy is nurtured regularly. You are partners for life and how wonderful the feeling is day-to-day. Love is no longer an ideal, a fantasy, hope, wish, dream, or a “someday” experience. Love is an every day reality. And you KNOW it will never go away. This is the goal so many lovers want and so many never achieve.

Your love isn't an agreement. Rather, your love gives you continued confidence, security, nurturing, fun, stability, and sense of empowerment. You have learned to thrive together. You have accepted each other completely and are enjoying the “being” and “doing” of life together. This step on the Intimacy, Love and Dating Scale strengthens your desire to always reach for your best self.

Know that even if a relationship has failed there is hope. If you have lost a loved one, husband or wife, you are significantly likely to find true love again.

