



DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR
COUPLES

PREPARE  ENRICH.

The Discussion Guide is a complement to your Couple Checkup results and it provides additional insights and discussion prompts about various relationship topics.

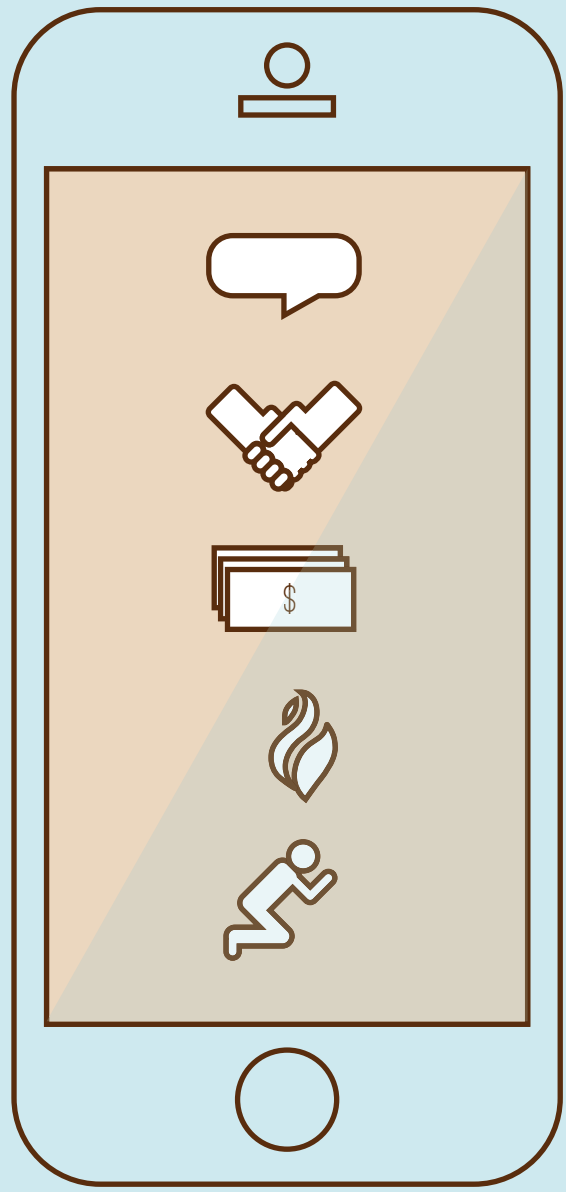
To get the most out of Couple Checkup, we recommend first reading through the following sections: Preparing for Discussion, Checking Out Your Results, and Defining the Journey. We suggest you then make your way through the three central relationship topics: Communication, Dealing with Conflict and Personality (noted in green). You can choose which of the remaining topics (noted in orange) you work through and in which order. If you and your partner disagree whether or not to discuss a topic, we suggest discussing it.

Since this is not a workbook, there is no need to print it out or write out your answers to questions. Though, if you prefer to journal or keep notes on your discussions, grab a notebook!

Each topic area has a discussion section where you'll find questions or prompts to encourage conversation. Remember, you and your partner are controlling the discussion, so whether you want to answer one question or all the questions, it's up to you and your partner to decide what feels right. For the questions you decide to discuss, it doesn't always explicitly instruct both partners to answer, but we would encourage you to reciprocate if your partner answers. If you don't have an answer, talk about the fact that you don't have an answer.

To avoid one partner dominating the conversation, take turns reading the questions, or at least take turns answering first. You don't have to be technical and tally your responses, but just keep in mind these little things that help set the tone for fairness.

The final and most important thing to consider when embarking on this journey with your partner is application into your actual life with one another. We want to make sure you are equipped to apply new insights and learnings to your life in a responsible way. Try making small changes to better connect with your partner instead of changing everything at once. And of course seeking help from a professional is a great option.



checklist



Communication



Dealing with Conflict



Personality



Balancing I and We



Commitment



Expectations



Family & Friends



Forgiveness



Free Time



Intimacy



Money



Parenting



Roles



Spirituality

PREPARING

FOR DISCUSSION

PREPARATION
REQUIRES EFFORT
AND THINKING
AHEAD, BUT IT
INCREASES YOUR
ACHIEVEMENT IN
THE LONG RUN.



By preparing to discuss with your partner, you are setting your journey up for success. We want you to make sure you and your partner are both ready to discuss your Couple Checkup results and to work through the discussion questions for each topic.

Before you sit down to look at your Couple Checkup report and this Discussion Guide, check if you are ready.

check yourself

EMOTIONALLY

What kind of day have you had? Have your emotions been fairly neutral? Or have you experienced any high levels of sadness, anger, or joy? We recommend having discussions about your relationship on days where your emotions have been calm.

MENTALLY

Are you open to change? Are you comfortable practicing communication skills such as active listening and assertiveness? Is your mindset welcoming to honest discussion? There is no sense in trying to have a discussion if you've already made up your mind about everything related to your relationship.

check your space

ENVIRONMENTALLY

Do your kids require your attention? Is the TV on? Is your phone on the highest volume? Is your computer/tablet within reach? Is the oven timer about to beep, signaling dinner is ready? Neutralize as many distractions as you can. Try to occupy your kids with other activities, turn off the TV, put your phone on silent and flip it over so you can't see notifications, put away your computer/tablet, and maybe try discussing after dinner. Of course, it's okay to keep a device at hand if you're using it to read through this Discussion Guide. 😊

PHYSICALLY

Where are you going to discuss? Sitting at the kitchen table or on the couch? While on a walk through your neighborhood? Find a location that is comfortable and somewhat private so you can have those honest discussions. We suggest placing yourselves shoulder to shoulder instead of knee to knee, as it promotes the idea that you are on the same team. It will feel less confrontational than being across from each other.



am I ready?

Move forward when both you and your partner can confidently answer: Yes. Only you can decide if you are ready or not, but we have provided some thoughts to consider.

**If you decide
you are ready to
move forward
with reviewing
your Couple
Checkup report
and working
through the
Discussion Guide
—that’s
awesome.**

If you decide you need to make some adjustments before discussing – that’s awesome too! The goal of this Discussion Guide is to get you talking to your partner, even if that conversation doesn’t happen right away.

CHECKING OUT

YOUR RESULTS

Congratulations! By taking Couple Checkup, you have taken steps toward building a stronger and healthier relationship. The act of completing an assessment primes you to be more open and motivated to discuss relationship topics with your partner. Make sure you and your partner celebrate this effort!

First things first, let's talk about how it felt to take the Couple Checkup. Reflect on your experience and then share with your partner. Here are **some feelings you might have experienced:**

- * Nervousness
- * Joy
- * Support
- * Judgement
- * Motivation
- * Pride
- * Embarrassment
- * Relief
- * Excitement
- * Anxiousness
- * Anticipation
- * Curiosity

Couple Checkup might have even felt like a test, but we promise it isn't. It's an assessment of your relationship across several categories. To give you a deeper understanding of what that means, let's talk about **what Couple Checkup IS and ISN'T.**

Couple Checkup **IS**

- ✓ A momentary snapshot of your relationship
- ✓ A catalyst for discussion between you and your partner
- ✓ Proven to lower your risk of divorce
- ✓ An accurate, research-based report of your relationship strength and growth areas
- ✓ A valid and reliable source of relationship enrichment

Couple Checkup **ISN'T**

- ✓ A reflection of what your relationship historically has been or will be in the future
- ✓ A compatibility report or a test you can pass or fail
- ✓ A guarantee for a successful relationship
- ✓ A measure that indicates you should break up or get married
- ✓ A replacement for professional relationship counseling

You know you can't pass or fail Couple Checkup and yet you probably noticed categories labeled as strength and growth areas. Let's define those terms, along with others, so you can unpack your **results**.

Throughout the Discussion Guide, you'll see terms defined in the sidebar just like this.

A **strength area** has high couple agreement whereas a **growth area** has low couple agreement. **Positive couple agreement** happens when both you and your partner answer in a healthy direction.

Near the end of your results, you'll find a map. The map represents the closeness and flexibility in your family or couple relationship. **Closeness** balances separateness and togetherness while **flexibility** balances stability and change. The healthiest positioning on the map, for each individual, is in the center indicating a balanced relationship between closeness and flexibility.

Your results conclude with the **personality SCOPE**. Each personality dimension is defined alongside your results. It's important here to focus on all 5 dimensions together instead of only focusing on dimensions that are high or low. For SCOPE, a high level does not indicate a strength just as a low level does not indicate needing growth.

If you and your partner ever feel overwhelmed by your results, we encourage you to seek out professional support.

◆ DEFINING ◆

THE JOURNEY

When you put effort towards something, it can be helpful to foresee outcomes. Whether you work through your Couple Checkup results and this Discussion Guide in its entirety or section by section, articulating outcomes now and being mindful of them along the way will help guide you and your partner to find success through this journey.

Accountability (or lack of it) can be the reason you reach (or fail to reach) a particular outcome. Write down a few outcomes and put them where you and your partner can see them. Maybe it's a shared calendar or on a note taped to the bathroom mirror. Keeping these visual reminders present during the time you are working through the Couple Checkup Discussion Guide will help remind you of the energy you are putting into your relationship.

Use the example outcomes as inspiration. When you create your own, make sure they are realistic and clearly stated.

OUR GOALS

- ✓ Gain awareness of our relationship's strength and growth areas
- ✓ Be more realistic about areas we need to work on in our relationship
- ✓ Celebrate our strengths
- ✓ Communicate more!

If you are unsure of what outcomes to commit to, take some time with your partner and talk through what you want to get out of this experience. Increased satisfaction? Greater understanding? More support? Enrichment?

Reflect on the outcomes you've set for your relationship and consider how you each will contribute.

Revisit your list desired outcomes when you are done working through the Couple Checkup Discussion Guide. Assess where progress was made and consider articulating relationship (and family) outcomes to continue the momentum.

COMMUNICATION

If you read *Preparing to Discuss*, then you're already aware of some tips on how to have great communication in discussions with your partner. Sure, we communicate with our partners, but the quality (which really matters) is not always a concern. Productive, supportive, positive communication is vital to relationship health.

FOCUS ON THE GOOD

When communicating with your partner, try to avoid blame, criticism, and judgement. Instead, focus on the good!



Give praise to your partner and share affirmations which help increase the overall quality of communication.

There are two skills that will help shape a positive environment for communication in your relationship: **assertiveness** and **active listening**. To be assertive, it's important to take responsibility for your thoughts and feelings by using

Assertiveness is expressing your feelings and asking for what you want in the relationship.

“I” statements instead of starting with “you.” The process of active listening lets the speaker know if their message was accurately received. It's imperative for the listener to acknowledge the content and the feelings of the speaker.

Active listening is listening attentively without interrupting and restating what was heard.

DISCUSSION

// Consider attention—How do you give your full attention when your partner is speaking? What distractions make it difficult to concentrate on your partner? How do you know you have your partner's full attention when you are speaking?

// Think about what is going on in your mind when your partner is speaking. How do you show you are truly processing the message they are sending versus already formulating a response?

// When is it difficult to communicate with your partner? What makes it easy to communicate with your partner? How is the subject matter an indicator of difficulty or ease? How do other environmental factors (time of day, etc.) play a role?

// What are other ways you communicate with your partner outside of verbal interactions? What non-verbal ways do you and your partner communicate? Brainstorm new ways to communicate with one another (a note left by their keys, a wink across the room, a kind text message, etc.).

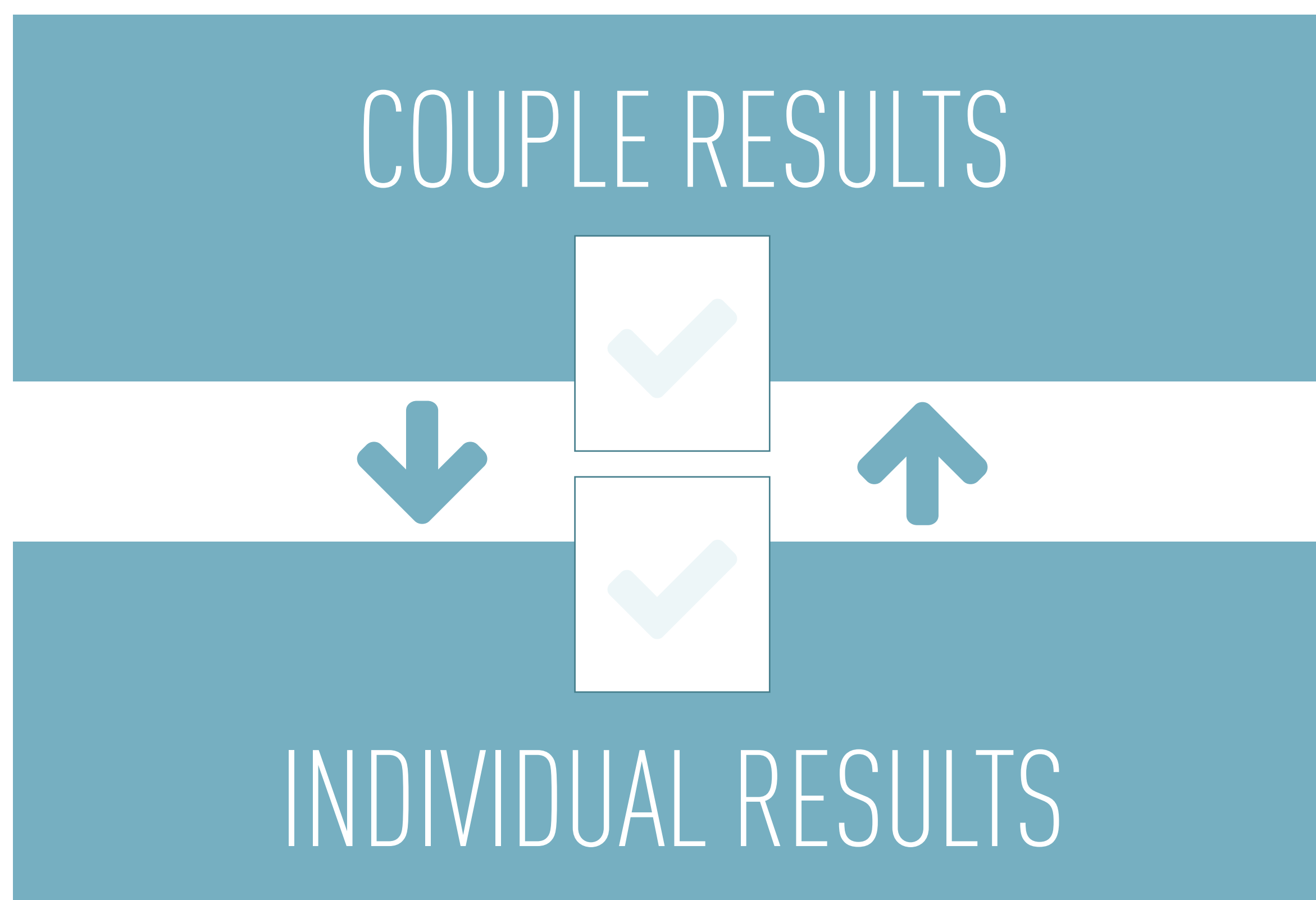
// What are your partner's needs? What are your needs? How do you advocate for your needs? How can asking about their needs and advocating for your own help your relationship?

CHECK IN WITH CHECKUP

Check in with your Couple Checkup results

by reviewing the Communication section of your report.

Are you surprised by the suggested discussion items?



Does this accurately reflect how you feel about communication in your relationship?

TAKEAWAY

Communication is the foundation of your relationship; you and your partner rely on healthy communication skills to productively work through both celebrations and struggles in your relationship.

APPLICATION

Focus on the good in your relationship every day by giving your partner a compliment or sharing an appreciation. Have some fun with this and get creative, but make sure to always be genuine.

NEXT STEPS

Plan a specific time to check in with your partner about your relationship and life together.

Don't use this time to decide who is going to pick up your daughter from soccer practice or whose turn it is to go to the grocery store.



Use this time to communicate about aspects of your relationship you overlook or take for granted.

Try to check in daily for a period of time and see the impact it has on your overall communication.

Let's be honest—you and your partner are going to have disagreements. Sometimes they'll be small (What movie should we watch?), but sometimes they'll be more serious (When are we going to have children?).

“Pick your battles”

is often given as advice for avoiding unnecessary conflict, but if you apply this advice to serious issues, it can be detrimental to your relationship. Pride, bias, and defense mechanisms prevent us from dealing with conflict in a healthy, productive manner. But it doesn't have to be that way. There are strategies you and your partner can use to effectively deal with conflict in your relationship.

When conflict arises, **avoid using blameful language** towards your partner as that invites negativity into the situation.

Communicate assertively, take responsibility for your own feelings and actions, and focus solely on the issue at hand.



It's important to resist the urge to bring up past experiences that have already been resolved and reopen them for discussion. Acknowledge the current disagreement and work through the conflict by actively listening to your partner. Respect your partner, remember you are on the same team, and know it's okay to take a time out if you need to. While embracing the conflict and dealing with it can be uncomfortable, it can ultimately bring you closer as a couple.

DISCUSSION

// What are your automatic negative responses when conflict arises? Anger? Withdrawal? Defensiveness? How do these reactions affect your ability to resolve issues respectfully? What can you do to counteract these reactions?

// How can you show your partner respect in the midst of conflict? What do you need to feel respected? Why is it important to be conscious of respect?

// What does “take responsibility for your own feelings” mean to you? What does it feel like to recognize your feelings in the situation? Are you relieved? Do you feel more vulnerable? Do you feel proud? How does this help emotionally charged situations?

// Consider conflict resolution vs. conflict management – What is the difference between resolving an issue and managing an issue? Is it a failure if you and your partner can't resolve a conflict? Are there some conflicts that need to be managed because they can never be completely resolved?

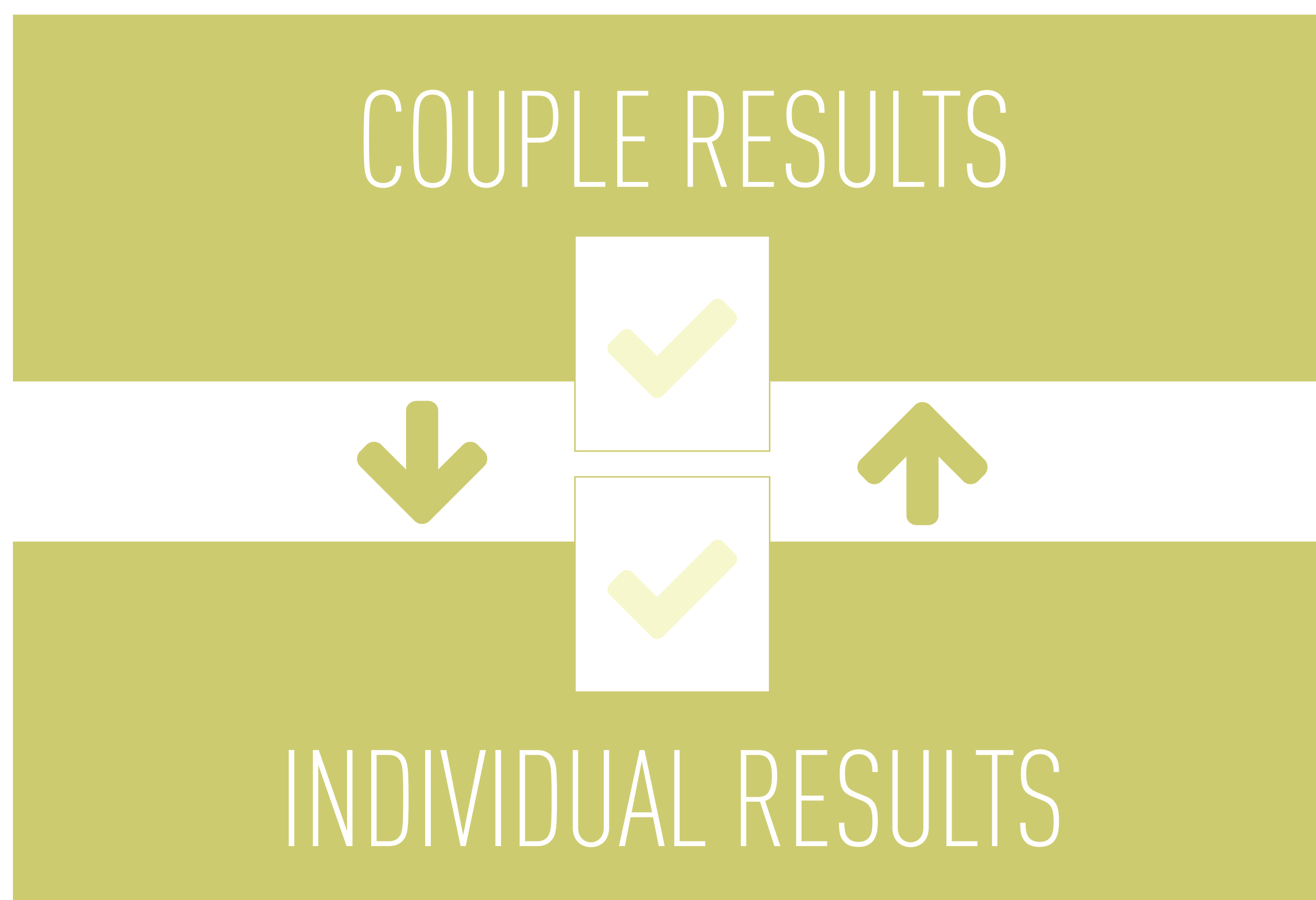
// How does non-verbal communication contribute to dealing with conflict? What are non-verbal cues that you give your partner or that your partner gives you that influence the direction of the discussion? Ask your partner what they often observe as you might not notice your own non-verbal cues, but remember to be respectful.

CHECK IN WITH CHECKUP

Check in with your Couple Checkup results

by reviewing the Conflict Resolution section of your report.

Are you surprised by the suggested discussion items?



Does this accurately reflect how you feel about dealing with conflict in your relationship?

TAKEAWAY

Conflict is inevitable in relationships, but if dealt with in a healthy, productive, and respectful way, it can bring you closer as a couple and make your relationship stronger.

APPLICATION

The next time you find yourself on the verge of an argument, focus on using “**I statements**” to take responsibility for your own feelings—“I felt _____ when _____”.

NEXT STEPS

Since it often takes time to learn new strategies and because conflicts organically develop, make a commitment to evaluate your next conflict.

Agree that the next time a conflict comes up, you'll take time to discuss how you dealt with the disagreement. Think of it as reviewing your performance.

Take note of what new strategies helped and where you each need to be more mindful. By doing this, you and your partner are being accountable for the application of these skills into your life and thus strengthening your relationship.

PERSONALITY IS
SIMPLY UNDERSTOOD
AS THE **SET OF**
CHARACTERISTICS
THAT LEAD TO
CONSISTENT
PATTERNS OF
FEELING, THINKING,
AND BEHAVING. IT
IS ONE OF THOSE
THINGS IN LIFE THAT
YOU CAN'T CHANGE
AND IT TENDS TO STAY
STABLE OVER TIME.

Some might argue you can change aspects of your personality, or your partner's, if you try hard enough. However, this is largely a misconception. What you can do is begin to understand your own personality as well as your partner's. **Insight into personality can help when you and your partner work on strengthening relationship skills.**

Your personality frames how you approach life. For some couples, having very different personalities can bring challenges.



There are many personality theories and concepts that can help you understand your own personality and your partner's.

Couple Checkup uses

SCOPE to help individuals see how high or low they score on each of the five factors of personality (Social, Change, Organized, Pleasing, Emotionally calm).

With SCOPE, it is possible to score high on all five factors (or low), and it isn't negative to be high or low on a particular factor.

You might want to consider seeking professional help if a particular factor is so extreme it is interfering with daily life.

We encourage you to embrace each other's personalities and continue to build relationship skills.

DISCUSSION

// How have you or your partner tried to change aspects of each other's (or your own) personality in the past? What was the motivation behind trying to encourage change?

// How do you and your partner's personalities complement each other? How do you and your partner's personalities challenge each other?

// Which of your partner's personality traits first attracted you? Were you attracted to the same trait or a different one?

// For each of you, which behaviors positively contribute to your relationship? What personality differences can you use to strengthen your relationship?

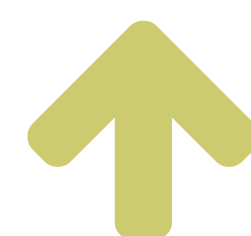
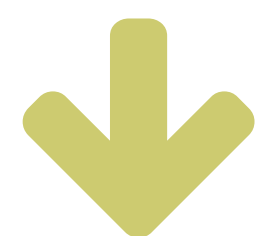
// While both "opposites attract" and "birds of a feather flock together" are true, which is the case for your relationship?

CHECK IN WITH CHECKUP

Check in with your Couple Checkup results

by reviewing the *SCOPE Personality* section of your report.

Do the roles you and your partner fulfill in your relationship match your personality strengths? (e.g. Does the person who scored high on organization manage the bills?)



Are you surprised by how you scored on a particular dimension or do the results accurately reflect how you perceive your personality?

TAKEAWAY

Personality is stable throughout life; don't expend energy in your relationship trying to change your partner's personality, instead put in effort to understand each other's personality factors as well as your own.

APPLICATION

Begin acknowledging aspects of your personality, as well as your partner's, in everyday life. For example, if one of you scored high on Social (extrovert) and the other scored low (introvert), consider this when planning weekend activities. Maybe this means you go to a friend's dinner party on Saturday and spend Sunday at home doing house projects.

NEXT STEPS

If personality is an area of your relationship you want to continue to explore, there are a variety of other assessments and theories that will give additional insight into each individual's personality.

Maybe spend an upcoming date night taking another personality assessment to continue learning even more about each other.