



“The key to growth is the production of higher dimensions of consciousness into our awareness.”
Lao Tzu

Ten Characteristics of a Conscious Relationship

By Eric Ehrke, LCSW, LMFT

1. Each partner realizes their loving relationship has a hidden purpose...the healing of childhood wounds and prior illusions. Daily interactions take on more meaning and provides a greater sense of control when couples embrace this prospective
2. Each partner is motivated to create a more accurate image of their lover. Romantic lovers often confuse adult partnership with their early primary caretaker dynamics. When this

occurs later in the relationship partners often project their negative traits onto their partner. This makes things worse because everyone needs to live in the same time zone. Then each partner is just another wounded person and not a savior, which is a common childhood illusion.

3. Each partner takes responsibility for communicating their needs and desires to each other.
4. Each partner becomes more intentional in their interactions. Automatic and unconscious knee-jerk behaviors reduce, and measured responses are chosen mindfully.
5. Each partner learns to value their partner's needs and wishes as highly as their own. Unconscious people want their partner to magically take care of their needs like a parent-child relationship. When partners become more mature and less narcissistic, they move to meet their partner's needs.
6. Each partner embraces the dark side of their personality, which therapists refer to as *shadow*. When couples own their negative traits (*shadow*), the less they project them onto their partner.
7. When each partner learns new techniques to satisfy their basic needs and desires, they stop blaming, shaming, coercing, and engaging in power struggles to get their needs met. Eventually, they enjoy becoming self-actualized and self-responsible...then giving becomes joyful.
8. Each partner searches within themselves to develop the internal strength and abilities they lack. Couples move from wanting, seeking and/or demanding their partner to take care of them to solving things by themselves.
9. Each partner becomes highly motivated to be more loving, whole and at one with their environment and the universe around them.
10. Each partner accepts the difficulty of creating a conscious relationship. Unconscious individuals think they just need to pick the perfect partner. Good relationships require commitment, discipline, and change. Conscious relationships are hard work.



“Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself.” Rumi

The following Shadow Meditation is a sentence completion exercise to explore unconscious motivations and illusions within a committed relationship. The sender reads the sentence stem and completes it in the presence of their partner. The receiver listens with an open heart and only speaks if asked to by the sender. The couple can explore any details or expand a topic further after the sender is complete. Allow reflection time, silence, and discussion before switching turns. Reading the questions and reflecting on your answers before talking with your partner is often helpful.

Shadow Meditation

Past

1. The shadow I brought into our relationship is...
2. What occurred in the past that caused my shadow to develop was...
3. My attitudes, judgments and personal feelings towards my shadow are...
4. When I experience my shadow, at a deep level I actually feel...
5. The words and actions I needed in the past from my caretakers were...

Present

6. When I have been unconscious of my shadow in the past, my behaviors and thoughts towards you have been...

7. I express my shadow in our relationship in the following ways...
8. The price I have paid for not embracing my shadow has been...
9. The price you and our relationship has paid for my shadow has been...
10. The lesson my shadow is there to teach me is...
11. The words and actions I need to say and embody to heal my shadow now are...

Future

12. I realize now that I project my shadow on you in the following ways...
13. This is what I need to do or let go so I can embrace, accept, and take responsibility for my shadow from now on...
14. When my shadow and my behaviors associated with it are activated in the future, I will let you know what is happening in the following way or ways...
15. When you sense I am lost in my shadow, you can help me in the following way or ways...
16. If I own and heal my shadow mindfully, each of us and our relationship would benefit in the following ways...

Appreciation

17. What I really enjoy about our relationship and you in particular...
18. Here are the ways I hope our relationship can grow when our shadows are not lurking in the corner...
19. Thank you partner for listening with love and empathy...



“No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it.” Albert Einstein

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