

REVISED AND UPDATED EDITION

# FIVE STEPS TO ROMANTIC LOVE



A Workbook for Readers of  
*His Needs, Her Needs* and *Love Busters*

**WILLARD F. HARLEY, JR.**

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# INTRODUCTION

Romantic love can last a lifetime if couples follow two rules: (1) meet each other's most important emotional needs and (2) avoid hurting each other. It's just that simple. I wrote *His Needs, Her Needs* to help couples follow the first rule: learning to identify and meet each other's most important emotional needs. I wrote *Love Busters* to help couples follow the second rule: learning to identify and eliminate harmful behaviors that I call "Love Busters."

These two books, *His Needs, Her Needs* and *Love Busters*, contain contracts, questionnaires, inventories, worksheets, and other forms that I use as part of marital therapy. But because of space limitations, they are reduced in size and often incomplete. In response to many of my readers' requests for the full-sized forms, I've compiled this workbook. It contains not only the forms described in my two books but also many others that will help you create and sustain romantic love.

This workbook is not intended to be used by itself: it is a supplement to the 2022 edition of *His Needs, Her Needs* and the 2016 edition of *Love Busters*. As the forms are introduced here, I refer you to the chapters in these books that will be helpful in understanding how to use the forms.

I have grouped these forms into a five-step sequence. The sequence is suggested in the opening chapter of *Love Busters*, but I make it clearer in this workbook.

The first step in building romantic love is making a commitment to do just that. Goals are not achieved by chance: leaving things to chance creates problems. So if you want to keep romantic love in your marriage, you must commit yourselves to that purpose. I designed the Agreement to Meet the Most Important Emotional Needs and Overcome Love Busters to spell out very clearly what it takes to guarantee romantic love. In essence, this form commits you to following the remaining four steps.

The second step is identifying the most important emotional needs. When these needs are met, romantic love is guaranteed. The Emotional Needs Questionnaire is designed to help you identify and communicate your most important emotional needs to each other.

The third step to romantic love is learning to meet the needs you identified in step 2. Chapters 3–12 in *His Needs, Her Needs* describe the ten most common emotional needs and some of the forms I use to help couples learn to meet these needs. These forms and several others I use are printed in this section of the workbook.

The forms in this workbook, with a few exceptions, are arranged in a logical sequence. First, behavior likely to meet each need is identified in an *inventory* form. Second, a plan to learn behavior that meets the need is documented on a *strategy* form. Third, progress toward the achievement of the goal is recorded on a *worksheet* form.

The fourth step is identifying habits that destroy romantic love. As I explain in the first chapter of *Love Busters*, it's pointless to build romantic love if you persist in habits that undermine your effort. I designed the Love Busters Questionnaire to help you identify these destructive habits. When you and your spouse have accurately completed this questionnaire, you'll know if you've been destroying romantic love.

The fifth step is overcoming the Love Busters you identified in the fourth step. Chapters 4–15 in *Love Busters* introduce and describe each of the six Love Busters. They also suggest methods to help you eliminate them. Most of the forms in this section of the workbook are described in these chapters and are designed to help you overcome Love Busters systematically.

There are three forms to help you overcome each Love Buster. First, there is an inventory to identify the bad habit. Then there is a form to document the strategy you've chosen to eliminate it. Finally, a worksheet helps you document progress toward your goal.

This workbook will help you (1) make a commitment to create and sustain romantic love, (2) identify the most important emotional needs, (3) learn to meet them, (4) identify habits that destroy romantic love, and (5) overcome those Love Busters.

I don't believe in "insight therapy" as an effective way to resolve marital conflict—I believe in "action therapy." Insight is a good beginning, but it's what you do that solves your problem. The forms in this workbook are designed to turn insight into action. They will help you identify your marital problems and create ways to solve them. If you cannot create a strategy that you and your spouse agree to or if you cannot follow your own program, as evidenced by your failure to complete assignments, then you need a marriage counselor to help guide you. The last section of this workbook will help you find a good counselor.

Your effort to sustain romantic love will also be an effort to resolve your marital conflicts. That's because most conflicts arise when one spouse refuses to meet the other's important emotional needs or tries to gain at the other's expense (a Love Buster). The only way romantic love can be sustained is by learning to accommodate each other's feelings, learning behavior that meets each other's needs, and avoiding behavior that hurts each other. When you've learned how to do that, conflicts are resolved and romantic love will be yours for a lifetime. Toward the end of this workbook, you will find a series of exercises that will train you to resolve your conflicts the right way: safely and effectively.

Follow these *Five Steps to Romantic Love* and you'll have a marriage that is passionate and free of conflict. It's well worth the effort!

## STEP 1

---

# Making a Commitment to Build Romantic Love

It's a shame that our wedding vows are usually vague or impossible to keep. Wedding vows should state realistic commitments that, if kept, would ensure the success of the marriage. Without clear and attainable objectives, it's no wonder that over half of our marriages end in divorce and another one-third remain disappointing throughout life. That leaves about one marriage in five that is successful. Part of the problem is that we begin marriage without clear objectives.

I've written a marriage agreement that should have been used in your wedding. If your vows were vague and gave you no clear direction, don't despair. There's time to make a new commitment that makes more sense. This commitment is designed to help you achieve for your marriage everything you ever hoped for: sustained romantic love. In this agreement, you and your spouse will commit yourselves to do what it takes to be in love with each other for the rest of your lives.

Romantic love is the feeling of incredible attraction toward another person, and people rarely marry without it. It just doesn't make sense to marry someone unless you're in love. But romantic love is very fragile and requires special care for it to continue throughout life.

The way I explain the rise and fall of romantic love to my clients is to introduce them to the Love Bank. We all have one inside of us that keeps a record of the way people affect us. When someone does something that makes us feel good, that person deposits love units in our Love Bank. Parents, siblings, children, and most friends deposit love units when they meet our emotional needs, which makes us feel good. We like people who have positive balances in their accounts with us.

When someone meets our *most* important emotional needs, large numbers of love units are deposited because that person makes us feel exceptionally good. When the account in our Love Bank reaches a threshold, say, of one thousand love units, we experience romantic love toward that person. Generally, that threshold can be reached only when a member of the opposite sex meets our most important emotional needs.

Just as with any bank account, deposits are not the only transactions in the Love Bank; withdrawals can also take place. When someone does something that makes us feel bad, that

person withdraws love units. If love unit deposits cease and withdrawals continue, an account can become overdrawn. When that happens, we dislike or even come to hate that person.

How we feel toward people depends on their account balances in our Love Bank. When they have very high balances, we like or possibly love them. When they have negative balances, we dislike or possibly hate them.

You must remember that when I talk about romantic love, I am referring to *emotional* feelings of attraction. The emotional feelings of love and hate depend on Love Bank balances. But there's another type of love that I call "care," which is meeting someone's needs or taking someone's feelings into account. This kind of love does not necessarily depend on the balances in the Love Bank. It's possible for all of us to love (care for) someone we are not "in love" with, someone we are not emotionally attracted to. Love that implies "care" is a *behavior* that actually meets someone's needs. Romantic love, on the other hand, is a *feeling* we experience when someone meets *our* most important emotional needs.

The two concepts of romantic love and caring love come together in marriage. You care for your spouse when you meet their most important emotional needs and avoid hurting them. That in turn causes your spouse to feel romantic love for you. When your spouse shows caring love for you, meets your needs, and avoids hurtful behavior, you feel romantic love for your spouse.

I view romantic love as a litmus test of our ability to care. If we are effective in our care, romantic love is secure, because we are depositing love units and avoiding their withdrawal. We are meeting the most important emotional needs and avoiding harmful behavior. When our spouse no longer feels romantic love toward us, we are failing to care effectively.

The first two chapters of *His Needs, Her Needs* and the first two chapters of *Love Busters* provide a more detailed explanation of what I've been writing about. The basic point I make is that if you want romantic love, you must meet each other's most important emotional needs and avoid hurting each other. In other words, you must care for each other.

The marriage agreement that I recommend commits you to developing the care that sustains romantic love. Once you develop that care, you'll meet your spouse's most important emotional needs and avoid hurting your spouse. In other words, you'll be depositing love units and not withdrawing them. This is the foundation of romantic love.

The first part of the agreement commits you to identifying and meeting your spouse's five most important emotional needs. If you have not already read *His Needs, Her Needs*, you should read at least chapters 1, 2, 15, and Appendix A in that book. Bonus chapter "Building Romantic Love with Time" in *Love Busters* will also provide you with an explanation of this commitment.

The second part of the agreement commits you to avoiding Love Busters, habits that cause your spouse unhappiness. My book *Love Busters* is written to help couples identify and learn to overcome these destructive habits. If you have not already read this book, you should read at least the first eight chapters to gain an understanding of Love Busters and the second part of the agreement.

After you have read the agreement and signed it with a witness present, you've completed the first step to romantic love: making a commitment to build romantic love. It's also a commitment to complete the remaining four steps.

# AGREEMENT TO MEET THE MOST IMPORTANT EMOTIONAL NEEDS AND OVERCOME LOVE BUSTERS

THIS AGREEMENT is made this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_\_, between \_\_\_\_\_, hereinafter called “husband,” and \_\_\_\_\_, hereinafter called “wife,” whereby it is mutually agreed:

- I. The husband and wife agree to meet each other’s most important emotional needs by:
  - A. Identifying each other’s emotional needs and selecting at least five that are most important to the husband and at least five that are most important to the wife. These may include any of the following:
    1. Affection: expressing love in words, cards, gifts, hugs, kisses, and courtesies, creating an environment that clearly and repeatedly expresses love.
    2. Sexual fulfillment: understanding one’s own sexual response and that of the spouse and learning to bring out the best of that response in both oneself and the other so that the sexual relationship is mutually enjoyable and frequent.
    3. Intimate conversation: setting aside time each day to talk to each other about events of the day, feelings, and plans; avoiding angry or judgmental statements or dwelling on past mistakes; showing interest in the spouse’s favorite topics of conversation; balancing conversation, using it to inform, investigate, and understand each other; and giving each other undivided attention.
    4. Recreational companionship: developing an interest in the favorite recreational activities of the spouse, learning to be proficient in them, and joining in those activities; if they prove to be unpleasant after an effort has been made, negotiating new recreational activities that are mutually enjoyable.
    5. Honesty and openness: describing one’s own positive and negative feelings, events of one’s past, daily events and schedule, and plans for the future; never leaving the spouse with a false impression; and answering the spouse’s questions truthfully and completely.
    6. Physical attractiveness: keeping physically fit and wearing hair and clothing in a way that the spouse finds attractive and tasteful.
    7. Financial support: assuming responsibility to house, feed, and clothe the family at a standard of living acceptable to the spouse, but avoiding working hours and travel that are unacceptable to the spouse.
    8. Domestic support: helping with household tasks and childcare to create a home environment that offers a refuge from the stresses of life.
    9. Family commitment: scheduling sufficient time and energy for the moral and educational development of the children; reading to them and taking them on

frequent outings; learning about appropriate child-training methods and discussing those methods with the spouse; and avoiding any child-training method or disciplinary action that does not have the enthusiastic support of the spouse.

10. Admiration and appreciation: understanding and appreciating the spouse more than anyone else, and never criticizing but showing profound respect and pride.

B. Creating a plan to help form the new habits that will meet these five needs.

C. Evaluating the success of the plan, creating a new plan if the first is unsuccessful, and learning to meet new emotional needs if the spouse replaces any of the original five with a different set of five.

II. The husband and wife agree to avoid being the cause of each other's pain or discomfort by protecting each other from:

A. Selfish demands: commanding the other to do something with implied threat of punishment if they refuse. If selfish demands occur, the husband and wife will follow a course of action that identifies selfish demands, investigates their causes, keeps a record of their occurrences, and replaces them with thoughtful requests.

B. Disrespectful judgments: attempts to change the other's attitudes, beliefs, and behavior by trying to force their way of thinking through lectures, ridicule, threat, or other forceful means. If disrespectful judgments occur, the husband and wife will follow a course of action that identifies disrespectful judgments, investigates their causes, keeps a record of their occurrences, and replaces them with respectful persuasion.

C. Angry outbursts: deliberate attempts to hurt the other because of anger, usually in the form of verbal or physical attacks. If angry outbursts occur, the husband and wife will follow a course of action that identifies angry outbursts, investigates their motives and causes, keeps a record of their occurrences, and eliminates them.

D. Dishonesty: failure to reveal to the other correct information about emotional reactions, personal history, daily activities, and plans for the future. If dishonesty occurs, the husband and wife will follow a course of action that identifies dishonesty, investigates its causes, records its occurrences, and replaces it with emotional, historical, current, and future honesty.

E. Annoying habits: behavior repeated without much thought that bothers the other spouse. If an annoying habit occurs, the husband and wife will follow a course of action that identifies the annoying habit, investigates the motives and causes of the habit, keeps a record of its occurrences, and eliminates the habit.

F. Independent behavior: conduct of one spouse that ignores the interests and feelings of the other. If an independent behavior occurs, a husband and wife will follow a course of action that identifies the independent behavior, investigates its cause, keeps a record of its occurrence, and replaces it with interdependent behavior, conduct that nurtures and protects the interests and feelings of both spouses.

III. THIS AGREEMENT is being made under, and will be governed by, the laws of the state of \_\_\_\_\_.

*IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have signed this agreement on the day and year first above*

*written:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Husband*

*Wife*

*Witness*

## STEP 2

---

# Identifying the Most Important Emotional Needs

**W**hen your most important emotional needs are met by your spouse, they deposit the greatest possible number of love units into your Love Bank, and you will experience romantic love toward your spouse. The same is true for your spouse. When you meet their most important emotional needs, they will experience romantic love for you (as long as Love Busters don't withdraw all the love units you deposit).

You're the only one who can identify your most important emotional needs. Only you know what your spouse can do to give you the best feelings possible. So I've designed forms to help you communicate your needs to your spouse and to help your spouse communicate their needs to you.

The Emotional Needs Questionnaire helps each of you identify your most important emotional needs. When you have both completed this questionnaire, you will have identified for each other your five most important emotional needs, and you will have ranked them according to the pleasure each of you receives when these needs are met. The needs rated highest give you the most pleasure and deposit the most love units when they are met.

If you can learn to meet your spouse's five most important emotional needs, and your spouse can learn to meet yours, you'll find each other irresistible! To discover these important emotional needs, complete the following questionnaire.

## EMOTIONAL NEEDS QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is designed to help you determine your most important emotional needs and evaluate your spouse's effectiveness in meeting those needs. Answer all the questions as candidly as possible. Do not try to minimize any needs that you feel have been unmet. If your answers require more space, use and attach a separate sheet of paper.

Your spouse should also complete the Emotional Needs Questionnaire so that you can discover their needs and evaluate your effectiveness in meeting those needs.

When you have completed this questionnaire, go through it a second time to be certain your answers accurately reflect your feelings. Do not erase your original answers, but cross them out lightly so that your spouse can see the corrections and discuss them with you.

The final page of this questionnaire asks you to identify and rank five of the ten needs in order of their importance to you. The most important emotional needs are those that give you the most pleasure when met and frustrate you the most when unmet. Resist the temptation to identify as most important only those needs that your spouse is not presently meeting. Include *all* your emotional needs in your consideration of those that are most important.

Make two copies of this questionnaire, one for each of you to complete, unless you each have your own copy of this workbook.





















**Ranking Your Emotional Needs**

The ten important emotional needs are listed below. There is also space for you to add other emotional needs that you feel are essential to your marital happiness.

In the space provided in front of each need, write a 1 before the most important need, a 2 before the next most important need, and so on until you have ranked your five most important needs.

To help you rank these needs, imagine that you will have only one need met in your marriage. Which would make you the happiest, knowing that all the others would go unmet? That need should be 1. If only two needs will be met, what would your second selection be? Which five needs, when met, would make you the happiest?

- \_\_\_\_\_ affection
- \_\_\_\_\_ sexual fulfillment
- \_\_\_\_\_ intimate conversation
- \_\_\_\_\_ recreational companionship
- \_\_\_\_\_ honesty and openness
- \_\_\_\_\_ physical attractiveness
- \_\_\_\_\_ financial support
- \_\_\_\_\_ domestic support
- \_\_\_\_\_ family commitment
- \_\_\_\_\_ admiration and appreciation
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_