

UNDERSTANDING YOUR COMMITMENT

Commitment is an important part of your relationship. It influences how you and your partner handle conflict as well as the expectations you both have for your relationship. There are two kinds of commitment: Dedication and Constraint.

How committed are you to your relationship?

- Would you say you have a desire to maintain or improve your relationship to benefit yourself and your partner?
- Do you make sacrifices for your relationship?
- Do you feel better and happier when your relationship succeeds?
- Are you looking out for your partner's as well as your own needs?
- When you think about your relationship, do you think about *trust, devotion, loyalty, sacrifice, and priority*?

If so, then your commitment may be based on **personal dedication**. If this sounds like your commitment, then you might imagine growing old with your partner. You live your life with your relationship in the forefront of what you do. You work together with your partner on issues, like a team. You do things because your partner enjoys them. You cannot see yourself with someone else.

- Do you feel forced into staying with your partner by external or internal pressures?
- Do you think about leaving your relationship, but realize it would be too difficult?
- Would you leave your relationship if you were better off financially, personally, or socially?
- Do you feel pressure to stay in your unhappy relationship because of your children or pressure from your family?
- When you think about your relationship, do you think about being *trapped, feeling guilty or feeling obligated to your partner*?

If so, then your commitment may be based on **constraints**. Maybe you do not believe in divorce or quitting. You might be worried about how a divorce would affect your children and family life. Maybe you and your partner share everything, and you cannot imagine how you would divide your possessions. Maybe you do not feel like you want to start over in another relationship.

NOTE: All relationships develop some constraints over time. It is natural for constraints to increase throughout marriage and serious relationships. However, problems often arise when constraints increase while personal dedication decreases. Maybe you feel like the effort you put into your relationship isn't paying off or isn't worth the energy anymore. This might be an indication that your constraints have increased, but your personal dedication has declined. Personal dedication plays an important role in maintaining relationship satisfaction and decreasing conflict within your relationship. *If you are experiencing problems with commitment in your relationship, try to reduce your feelings of constraint and increase your personal dedication to the relationship.*

INCREASING YOUR COMMITMENT TO YOUR RELATIONSHIP

What if you realize you have lost some of your personal dedication to your relationship? How can you get it back? Even if you are dedicated to your relationship, you may still wonder how you can prevent it from slipping away.

How can you increase commitment?

- ♥ **HAVE A LONG-TERM VIEW OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP**
In a healthy and happy relationship, the combination of constraint and dedication creates a feeling of permanence, or stability, for the couple. This is important because no relationship is always satisfying.
 - ♥ **INVEST IN YOUR MARRIAGE**
Work through the difficult times so you reach the payoff time of the happy and positive aspects of your relationship. They are bound to come back again.
 - ♥ **DO NOT HEDGE YOUR BETS**
Do not hold back from your partner, just in case things don't work out. Assume they will! Work on strengthening your marriage, rather than considering affairs or spending time at work to avoid being at home.
 - ♥ **AVOID SCORE-KEEPING**
You will always feel like you are doing more than your partner in the relationship. This is because you do not have access to all of the little things your partner does throughout the day. Score-keeping is not fair because you only know about everything you do. So, focus on finding the good things your partner does for you. Work on what you can do to improve your relationship and how you can make your partner happy. It will come back to you!
 - ♥ **BUILD TRUST AND COMMITMENT**
Spend time on this and watch your marriage grow stronger everyday! How can you do this? By being trusting and committed yourself - even when it is hard to do.
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