



# EAP News

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## Love Maps

Mike Melles, M.Ed., EAP Counsellor

*John Gottman is a renown researcher in the science and art of love. In fact, he has spent decades observing thousands of couples interacting in a research space he built in Seattle that he dubs the "love lab". In this lab, Gottman records the ordinary lives of couples interacting for days at a time in their most ordinary moments... chatting, kissing, arguing, watching TV or cooking dinner. As a result of these many observations, Gottman believes that he can predict whether a couple will divorce with a 91% accuracy after having only observing them work through conflict for five minutes.*

*So with Valentines Day on the horizon, what are Dr. Gottman's suggestions for building a healthier and more vibrant relationship?*

*In his book "The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work" (Crown, 1999), it is obvious that the Gottman technique is all about focusing on the positive. He explains that, "The foundation of my approach is to strengthen the friendship that is at the heart of any marriage" (p.46).*

*Gottman claims that increasing positive interactions in a relationship, makes communication, negotiation, and conflict resolution easy or unnecessary. If the two partners feel positively toward each other, they will have no trouble resolving their resolvable conflicts, and they will be accepting of their irresolvable conflicts.*

*Gottman proposes three principles for implementing his "increase positive interactions" approach to couple therapy:*

- Know each other. Learn all about each other's likes, dislikes, wishes, hopes, dreams, etc.*
- Focus on each other's positive qualities, positive feelings for each other, and the good times you have shared with each other.*
- Interact frequently, tell each other about your day, your thoughts, your experiences. Romance is fuelled not by candlelight dinners, but by interacting with your partner in numerous little ways.*

*At the end of each chapter, Gottman includes different tests and exercises for assessing and implementing each of his seven principles in the reader's marriage.*

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### *Remember...*

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An example of one of these exercises is the creation of what Dr. Gottman calls "Love Maps." Creating a "Love Map" with your partner is a commitment to better understanding your partner's world. This is accomplished through exercises such as the following one where you attempt to complete sentences such as :

- My partner's major life dreams are . . .
- My partner's 3 favourite movies are . . .
- I think my partner would say my major life dreams are . . .

Another dimension of the Love Maps is his use of a rating scale. An example of his rating scale is "Rate the following on a scale of 1(not true) to 5(very true):

- My partner is aware of what I like most about him/her.
- I have complimented my partner in the past week.
- My partner has complimented me in the past week.

More of these ideas and exercises are found on Gottman's website ([www.gottman.com](http://www.gottman.com)) and also in the above mentioned "Seven Principles" book.

So this Valentines Day, go ahead and splurge on gifts of flowers and chocolates. However, if you really want to give an intimate and lasting gift, try cozying up to the fire with your partner...and pull out the "Love Maps".

## First comes love...then kids and money?

Mary Huntley, Credit Counsellor

Did your dad give you red hair? Did you get your upturned nose from your mom? Chances are your parents also gave you your attitude towards managing money.

That's right; most children learn to manage money from their parents. What attitudes are you passing along?

- Do you plan for major purchases, back to school or gift buying?
- Do you believe saving is possible, even on a limited income?
- Do you purchase on credit even when you know you can't afford it?
- Do you make purchases to make yourself feel better or compete with peers?
- Do you justify your purchases by thinking "I deserve it"?

When dealing with children and money, the most important elements are honesty and consistency. Set the money rules and stick to them. If you tell your child they can pick out a \$10 item in a store, don't spend \$15! If they ask for something you can't afford, tell them. "I can't afford it" has to mean "no". Buying items you can't afford or spending more than agreed sends the message that it's okay to get things you can't afford or stretch beyond your financial means.

When children are old enough to understand the concept of earning money and paying bills, consider sharing the family budget. What it costs to live in your house can be a real eye-opener to a 12 year old!

Do you know the difference between an allowance and spending money? An allowance is the same amount given on the same day every week. It is related to the same weekly responsibilities. For example, \$5 per week to keep their room tidy, take out the garbage and walk the dog. Spending money is "money on demand" and has no responsibilities attached. An allowance encourages learning money management.

Make allowances age appropriate...don't give a 6 year old the same as a 14 year old. Give the allowance in small denominations to allow for savings. Encourage saving 10% but also consider making the child responsible for contributing to an activity. Set an expectation that they will contribute \$20 towards the cost of a summer sport or dance class. Start the saving routine at an early age and help teach the value of money and what it can buy.

Another approach is the Money Jar System. Set up 3 jars, one for spending (maybe 80%) and one for saving (10%). The final jar (10%) is for giving...something that reflects family values or encourages a child to develop their own values. For example, they may give it to the church, Christmas toy drive, or local Humane Society. Allowances, birthday money or odd job pay will all get allocated to the money jars.

Talk with them about how they will use their spending, saving and giving money. You may be surprised by their ideas and discover a new family interest or open an unexpected dialogue.

