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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 *Love Busters* to help couples follow the first rule: learning to identify and eliminate harmful behavior that I call “Love Busters.” I wrote *His Needs, Her Needs* to help couples follow the second rule: learning to identify and meet each other’s most important emotional needs.

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 *His Needs, Her Needs* and *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.

Both books have been rewritten. So when you use this workbook be sure you are using the latest editions of the books.

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 to make 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 Overcome Love Busters and Meet the Most Important Emotional Needs form 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 to identify 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
Introduction

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 third step is to create and execute a plan that eliminates the Love Busters you identified in the second step. Chapters 3–8 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 habits. Then there is a form to document the strategy you’ve chosen to eliminate them. Finally, a worksheet helps you document progress toward your goal.

When you’ve conquered Love Busters, you’re ready for the fourth step to romantic love: 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 fifth step to romantic love is learning to meet the needs you identified in step four. 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 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.

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

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 chapter 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 tries to gain at the other’s expense (a Love Buster) or refuses to meet the other’s
important emotional needs. The only way romantic love can be sustained is by learning to accommodate each other’s feelings, avoiding behavior that hurts each other, and learning behavior that meets each other’s needs. When you’ve learned how to do that, conflicts are resolved and romantic love will be yours for a lifetime.

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!

*Note:* You may copy these forms as many times as you like for your personal use in the pursuit of your own marital objectives. In fact, you will need multiple copies of many forms to complete the assignments. However, the forms may not be copied for distribution to others without permission of the publisher.
STEP ONE

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 contract 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 contract 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 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 10,000 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 in 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 care come together in marriage. You care for your spouse when you meet his or her most important emotional needs. That in turn causes your spouse to feel romantic love for you. Your spouse's care for you, meeting your needs, causes you to 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 spouses no longer feel romantic love toward us, we are failing to care effectively.

The first chapter of Love Busters and the first two chapters of His Needs, Her Needs 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 avoid hurting each other, and you must meet each other's most important emotional needs. In other words, you must care for each other.

The marriage contract that I recommend commits you to developing the care that sustains romantic love. Once you develop that care, you'll meet
Step One—Making a Commitment to Build Romantic Love

your spouse's most important emotional needs and avoid hurting him/her. In other words, you’ll be depositing love units and not withdrawing them. Romantic love is guaranteed!

The first part of this agreement commits you to avoiding Love Busters, habits that cause your spouse unhappiness. My book *Love Busters* is written to help couples 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 first part of this agreement.

The second 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, and 14 in that book. Chapter 16 (Building Romantic Love with Care) in *Love Busters* will also provide you with an explanation of this commitment.

The third part of the agreement commits you to setting aside enough time to meet each other's emotional needs. I recommend at least fifteen hours of undivided attention each week to meet the emotional needs of affection, sexual fulfillment, recreational companionship, and conversation. These four emotional needs are certain to be important to you or your spouse, and they cannot be met without a commitment of time. When you were courting, you probably needed that much time to fall in love with each other, and you still need it to stay in love. If you fail to schedule enough time to be together after marriage, all your best efforts to meet each other's needs will fail. It takes time to fall in love and it takes time to stay in love. Chapter 17 (Building Romantic Love with Time) in *Love Busters* explains in more detail why you need undivided attention.

After you have read this agreement and signed it with a witness present, you’ve completed the first step to romantic love: a commitment to build romantic love. It’s also a commitment to complete the remaining four steps.
Agreement to Overcome Love Busters and Meet the Most Important Emotional Needs

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 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 he/she refuses. 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 his/her 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.
II. 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; learning to bring out the best of that response in both oneself and the other so that the sexual relationship is mutually satisfying and enjoyable.

3. **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, plans for the future; never leaving the spouse with a false impression; answering the spouse’s questions truthfully and completely.

6. **Physical Attractiveness**: Keeping physically fit with diet and exercise; 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**: Creating a home environment that offers a refuge from the stresses of life; managing the home and care of the children in a way that encourages the spouse to be in the home enjoying the family.

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; avoiding any child-training method or disciplinary action that does not have the enthusiastic support of the spouse.
Step One—Making a Commitment to Build Romantic Love

10. **Admiration:** Understanding and appreciating the spouse more than anyone else; 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; learning to meet new emotional needs if the spouse replaces any of the original five with new needs.

III. The husband and wife agree to give undivided attention to each other a minimum fifteen hours each week, meeting some of each other’s most important marital needs by:

   A. Ensuring privacy, planning time together that does not include children, relatives, or friends so that undivided attention is maximized.

   B. Using the time to meet the needs of affection, sexual fulfillment, conversation, and recreational companionship.

   C. Choosing a number of hours that reflects the quality of marriage: fifteen hours each week if the marriage is mutually satisfying and more time if marital dissatisfaction is reported by either spouse.

   D. Scheduling the time together in advance of each week and keeping a permanent record of the time actually spent.

IV. 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

Willard F. Harley, Jr.