

THIS RELATIONSHIP THING

50 Questions to Ask Before You Say I Do

Ten honest conversations to have before the wedding, not after.

From Andrew & Melissa Visagie

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A great marriage isn't found. It's built. These 50 questions are the conversations most couples only have after the wedding, usually in the middle of a fight. Have them now, while there's hope and goodwill, and you get to build on purpose instead of repairing later.

How to use this kit

There are ten parts with five questions each. Do one part per sitting, somewhere you won't be interrupted, phones away. Most parts take 30 to 45 minutes.

- **You both answer every question.** Take turns going first.
- **Get curious, not clever.** You're not trying to win or catch each other out. Ask "tell me more" before you agree or disagree.
- **Answer for yourself.** Say what you think and feel, not what you think your partner wants to hear.
- **Different answers are not a problem.** Every couple has differences. What matters is whether you can talk about them.
- **When Amy takes over, go get Bev.** If a question lights up a fight, stop. Breathe, take a break, and come back to it when you're both calm.
- **Keep one shared note.** Write down anything you want to come back to, so nothing gets lost.

Under each question is a short note on what to listen for. It's there to help you go deeper, not to score each other.

PART 1 The foundation of us

Start with why. Couples who know what they're building, and why, have something to come back to when it gets hard.

- 1 Why me, and why now? ("The venue's already booked" is not a reason.)**
Listen for: reasons that are about the two of you, not pressure from age, family or a ticking clock.
- 2 What does a good marriage actually look like to you? Whose do you admire, and why?**
Listen for: the picture each of you is quietly carrying in. You might be aiming at different targets.
- 3 What three values would you never trade away?**
Listen for: where your values overlap, and where they could pull against each other, like security versus adventure.
- 4 What does commitment mean on a hard day, when you are not feeling the love?**
Listen for: what each of you believes holds a couple together when the feelings dip.

5

What part do faith, spirituality or meaning play in your life, and in the one we will build?

Listen for: practices you each expect to keep, and what you would want to pass on to kids.

PART 2 The story you each bring

You're not just marrying a person. You're marrying the family that taught them what love looks like. Most of what you'll repeat, you learned before you could choose it.

6

How did your parents handle conflict, and what did you take from watching them?

Listen for: loud, silent, or never resolved. That is the default they will reach for under stress.

7

How was love shown in your home growing up? How was it withheld?

Listen for: words, touch, gifts, time or practical help. People give love the way they received it.

8

What did your family teach you about who does what in a marriage?

Listen for: expectations neither of you has said out loud, about work, home, money and who gets the final say.

9

What do you want to carry from your family into ours, and what do you want to leave at the door?

Listen for: the traditions you will protect and the patterns you are determined not to repeat.

10

What from your past still shapes how you love today?

Listen for: go at their pace. This one can take more than one conversation, and that is fine.

PART 3 Feeling understood

Empathy is a skill, not a personality trait. You learn it by finding out how your partner actually works, instead of assuming they work like you.

11

When you are upset, what helps most: a hug, some space, or help fixing it?

Listen for: the gap between what they need and what you would naturally offer. Most couples get this wrong for years.

12

When did you last feel truly understood by me? What did I do?

Listen for: the specific thing. That is your instruction manual, so keep it.

13

What is something about you that people usually get wrong?

Listen for: the part of them they are tired of explaining. Try not to be one more person who gets it wrong.

14

How can I tell you are stressed before you have said a word?

Listen for: the early tells, going quiet, going busy, going short. Agree how to check in when you spot them.

15

What do you need from me when you are sick, grieving, or have just fallen flat at something?

Listen for: the low moments test a marriage. Know the plan before you need it.

PART 4 Triggers and old wounds

Nobody arrives without sore spots. The move here is not to avoid them. It is to go hunting for the hurts, together, with the intent to heal them. The thing someone reaches for under stress, the phone, the wine, the online cart, the porn, is rarely the real issue. It is what soothes an older ache. You are learning to turn your partnership into the one place that story is safe. Go gently, and at each other's pace. If a question here is tough, or there is something you cannot say out loud yet, that is not failure. It is a sign a deeper, facilitated couples session could help you go there safely.

A NOTE ON SAFETY

Shame doesn't survive the light, but light needs safety. If your partner ever uses what you share here as ammunition, to bring you down, control you, or humiliate you, stop and ask some hard questions. That is not conflict. That is abuse, and we do not tolerate abuse. If that is your situation, please speak to a professional.

16

What is a reaction of yours that is bigger than the moment deserves?

Listen for: ownership. "I know I overreact when..." is a green flag.

17

What do I do, without meaning to, that lands on a sore spot?

Listen for: the link back to their story in Part 2. It usually is not really about you.

18

When life gets heavy, what do you reach for: the phone, a drink, work, the online cart, gaming, porn?

Listen for: honesty, not confession. Everyone has a soother. What matters is whether it is owned or hidden.

19

What is your mental health history, and how would I know if you were slipping?

Listen for: openness. Anxiety or depression that is being looked after is workable. What is hidden is the risk.

20

Is there anything you have not told me because you are scared it would change how I see you?

Listen for: receive it gently. This is where trust gets built or broken.

PART 5 How you talk

Most marriages don't break over one big issue. They wear down over thousands of small conversations that

didn't land. Talk about how you talk while it's still easy.

21 How often do you want to really talk, about more than logistics and the shopping list?

Listen for: different needs for depth. Neither is wrong, but you will need a rhythm that suits both.

22 When I need to raise something hard, how do you want me to bring it up?

Listen for: timing, tone and setting. Some want it straight, some need a warning shot.

23 What do we tiptoe around, and why?

Listen for: the subjects that already feel risky. Those are the ones that grow in the dark.

24 What do I do that makes you feel heard? What makes you shut the shutters?

Listen for: specifics, like eye contact, phone down, not leaping to fix it, not interrupting.

25 Fifteen honest minutes a week, just the two of us: in or out? And what would stop it feeling like a work meeting?

Listen for: a small habit you will both protect. A regular one catches problems while they are still small.

PART 6 Fighting well

Every couple fights. Strong couples aren't the ones who never fight. They're the ones who know how to repair.

26 When we fight, do you go loud, go quiet, or go away?

Listen for: your two styles side by side. A chaser and a runner can circle each other for years.

27 What is below the belt? Agree what is off limits now.

Listen for: name calling, mocking, dragging up old mistakes, threatening to leave. Contempt is the real marriage killer.

28 How do you apologise, and what does a real apology from me actually sound like?

Listen for: whether "sorry" lands, or whether they need you to name what you did and what changes.

29 After a fight, how long do you need before we can talk it through?

Listen for: different timelines. A break is a pause, not an exit. Agree who comes back to it.

30 At what point would we get outside help, and would you actually go?

Listen for: agree the signal now, like the same fight for a month. Then asking later is a plan, not an attack.

PART 7 Money

Money fights are rarely about money. They are about safety, freedom, fairness and trust. A scarcity story from childhood, or a habit of spending to feel like you are winning, will show up here long before the numbers do.

Put both the figures and the feelings on the table.

- 31** What did money mean in your home growing up: safety, stress, power, or the thing nobody mentioned?
| **Listen for:** the feeling attached to money. That is what shows up when you disagree about it.
- 32** What do you earn, what do you owe, and what have you saved?
| **Listen for:** full disclosure, debt and credit history included. No skeletons in the overdraft.
- 33** Joint, separate, or both? And who runs what?
| **Listen for:** what feels fair to each of you, which is not always the same as equal.
- 34** What is the number you can spend without a “babe, so, funny story...” text first?
| **Listen for:** a figure you both agree on, and what each of you buys that the other calls a waste.
- 35** What are we saving for, and how do we handle family who need help?
| **Listen for:** expectations about helping parents or siblings, and how you will decide together when it lands.

PART 8 Family, children and home

A wedding joins two families and starts a third. Decide together how the new one runs, before habit and expectation decide for you.

- 36** Kids: yes, no, how many, when? And what if it does not go to plan?
| **Listen for:** a “maybe” is not a yes. Talk about fertility, loss and adoption now, gently, while it is still hypothetical.
- 37** How do you want to raise them: discipline, school, faith, screens?
| **Listen for:** the parenting you each got, coming through. See Part 2.
- 38** How involved do our families get: holidays, visits, advice, money?
| **Listen for:** where the two families' expectations will collide, especially over December and the big calls.
- 39** If my family takes a swing at you, or tries to get between us, what do you do?
| **Listen for:** a willingness to put the marriage first and handle your own family yourself.
- 40** Who does what at home, and what actually feels fair?
| **Listen for:** the mental load, not just the chores. Who remembers, plans and notices counts as much as who scrubs.

PART 9 Intimacy, affection and sex

Sex is a wonderful part of connection, not a substitute for it. The couples who stay close are the ones who can talk about it, the good and the awkward, and keep hunting for the hurts underneath with the intent to heal

them. Same rule as Part 4: this only works when it is safe.

41

What makes you feel loved and close on an ordinary day?

Listen for: the small stuff, a text, a touch on the way past, the coffee made without being asked. Closeness is built in the small moments.

42

How much affection do you need that has nothing to do with sex?

Listen for: whether either of you has started pulling back from touch because it always seems to lead somewhere.

43

How often would you like sex, and how do we handle it when we are out of sync?

Listen for: different appetites are normal. What matters is talking about it without blame or pressure.

44

What counts as cheating to you?

Listen for: where each of you draws the line, flirting, exes, emotional closeness, porn. Draw it clearly now, not later.

45

Is there anything about sex or your body that is hard to say out loud?

Listen for: go gently. Thank them for telling you, whatever it is.

PART 10 Hope and the life you're building

Hope isn't a wish. It's a shared goal, a plan to get there, and the belief that you'll make it. Finish by designing the life you're saying yes to.

46

Where are we in 5, 10 and 25 years? And where do we live?

Listen for: the size of each dream, and whether they point the same way.

47

How do our careers fit together? If one of us landed the dream job in another city or country, how would we decide?

Listen for: how you will weigh one person's big chance against the other's roots.

48

How do you want to look after your health, and how do we help each other do it?

Listen for: sleep, exercise, drinking, stress, check ups. You are about to share the consequences of each other's habits.

49

What is a good boring Tuesday for us? (Marriage is mostly Tuesdays.)

Listen for: the balance of time together, time apart, friends and rest.

50

What will we do to keep choosing each other once the confetti is swept up?

Listen for: concrete habits, a date night, a weekly reset, an annual state of the union. The wedding is one day. This is the rest of your life.

What to do with what you found

By now you'll have answers that fall into three groups. Each one needs something different.

- **Where you agree.** Celebrate it. This is your foundation, so say it out loud to each other.
- **Differences you can live with.** Name them, and agree how you'll handle them when they come up. A known difference is much easier than a surprise.
- **Differences that feel stuck or scary.** Don't paper over them because the date is booked. These are the ones to work on, together and with help if you need it.

Want to go deeper?

These questions open the conversations. Marriage Maker helps you have them well. It is our 10 day premarital course for couples who want to prepare before they need to repair. Each day has a short video, a lesson, a couple exercise and a tool you keep, from your shared mission statement to a plan for fighting well. It opens in February.

Join the waitlist and be first through the door: andrew976.systeme.io/ee6cd824

With love,
Andrew and Melissa Visagie
This Relationship Thing

This guide is educational. It isn't therapy and doesn't replace professional help. If any of these conversations leave you feeling unsafe, or reveal something bigger than you can work through together, please speak to a qualified professional.