

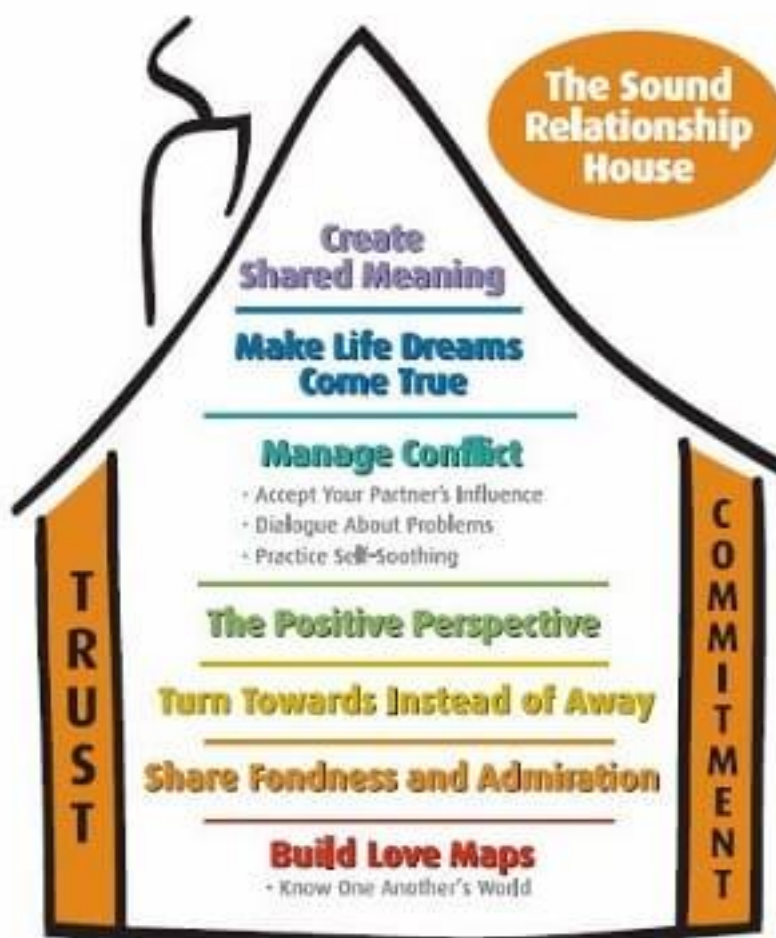
The Gottman Institute : a research-based approach to relationships

Dr Edwards-Skadowska curated reading/blog/research

What is the Sound Relationship House?

In his New York Times bestselling book [“The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work,”](#) Dr. John Gottman introduced the concept that a foundationally secure partnership is like a house. It has weight-bearing walls and levels that each person builds upon to create a sturdy bond. He called this structure the Sound Relationship House, and for more than 20 years, it’s given countless couples the tools they need to have happy healthy relationships.

So what is the Sound Relationship House exactly? Here is an overview floor by floor.



Floor 1: Build Love Maps

It all begins on the firm foundation of knowing each other. In the first level of the Sound Relationship House, partners build what Dr. John Gottman calls a “Love Map,” which is the essential guide to your partner’s inner world. What are their likes and dislikes? Who is your partner’s best friend? Did they have a happy childhood? How do they prefer to relax after a tense day? Building Love Maps means asking the right questions to learn more about your partner. In an ideal relationship, you and your partner know each other better than anyone else.

Floor 2: Share Fondness and Admiration

Everyone needs to hear something nice about themselves, and it means the most when it comes from your partner. **Sharing Fondness and Admiration** sounds like vocalizing the characteristics that you appreciate. Perhaps you admire their sense of humor or the way they’re always willing to help someone in need. In healthy relationships, you can articulate the big and little reasons you love your partner.

Floor 3: Turn Towards

When you need attention, support, and comfort from your partner, you are likely to say something or make a gesture to elicit a response from them—what the Gottmans call a “bid.” Your partner **turns towards** that bid when they reply with what you need. Consistently turning away (or worst yet, turning *against*) a bid spells disaster for any relationship. When you both recognize and turn toward each other’s bids, you create a safe space for you both to express yourselves and your needs

Floor 4: The Positive Perspective

Isn’t so much of life all in how you look at it? That’s what the Positive Perspective offers. Couples in healthy relationships see the best in each other and don’t rush to offense or criticism. So, when your partner rushes out the door and forgets to kiss you goodbye, a Positive Perspective means that you give your partner the benefit of the doubt that they were absentmindedly preoccupied rather than intentionally negligent. Believing that you’re on the same team solidifies your union and strengthens you from the inside out.

Floor 5: Manage Conflict

Since you can't avoid conflict, knowing what to do when it inevitably shows is key. First, you need to accept your partner's **influence** — meaning you take their feelings and desires into account instead of doing everything your own way. Second, whether problems are solvable or perpetual, you dialogue about them. Third, when you feel yourself getting heated during an argument, **self-soothing** (such as taking a walk or taking deep breaths) will help you remain calm.

Floor 6: Make Life Dreams Come True

The beauty of good companionship is that you have someone who will not only encourage you in your goals but also help you reach them. This level can look like coming up with a plan to pay off debt brought into the partnership or being supportive of them going back to school. **Making life dreams come true** shows that you want the best possible life for your partner and you are willing to do what it takes to make that happen.

Floor 7: Create Shared Meaning

The top of the Sound Relationship House functions much like its foundation of Love Maps, except on this level, you build and understand an inner world *as a couple*. The Gottmans think of it as developing a culture of symbols and rituals that express who you are as a team. It can be as simple as getting pizza from the place you both love every Friday night and as intricate as the unique way you celebrate birthdays. These **Rituals of Connection** define you as a unit, and you create them together.

The Weight-Bearing Walls of Trust and Commitment

As important as all the floors of the Sound Relationship House are, they don't hold together without the pillars of **trust** and **commitment**. In a healthy, supportive relationship, two people make the decision to have faith in each other and stick together. They freely love one another and pledge to help that love grow.

The Sound Relationship House is a foundational theory of The Gottman Institute. With these principles guiding you, you'll have a relationship that can weather any storm.