

3- The Most Important Emotional Needs

As soon as I realized that a large Love Bank balance triggered the feeling of love, I went to work trying to discover what spouses could do for each other that would make the largest Love Bank deposits. I would ask couples, "What could your spouse do for you that would make you the happiest?" That very question focused on a core issue in marriage -- the issue of care. I could have asked the question, "How would you like your spouse to care for you?" As it turns out, care in marriage is doing what it takes to make each other happy.

When you were married, you and your spouse both promised to care for each other, and you expected that care from each other. You were in love, and you were highly motivated to make each other happy. But it might not have occurred to you at the time that if you didn't care for each other the right way, you might lose your love for each other. And along with your loss of love, you might lose your willingness to care for each other.

At the time, you probably did not know what caring for each other the right way meant. You thought that your commitment to care for each other would be sufficient to sustain your love. Even today, you may still be in the dark as to what it takes to care for each other the right way.

If that's the case, let me explain to you what care in marriage is: To care the right way, you must make large Love Bank deposits. And I've found that the best way to make those deposits is to meet each other's most important emotional needs.

What is an emotional need? It is a craving that, when satisfied, leaves you with a feeling of happiness and contentment, and, when unsatisfied, leaves you with a feeling of unhappiness and frustration. There are probably thousands of emotional needs. A need for birthday parties, peanut butter sandwiches, Monday Night Football, I could go on and on. Some people have some of those needs while others have different needs. If you feel good doing something, or if someone does something for you that makes you feel good, an emotional need has been met.

But not all emotional needs are created equally. When some are met, you may only feel comfortable--they make small Love Bank deposits. There are others, however, that can make you feel downright euphoric. In fact they make you so happy that you're likely to fall in love with the person that meets them. I call those our **most important emotional needs** because they make the largest Love Bank deposits of all. And those are the very same emotional needs that a husband and wife expect each other to meet in marriage.

By now you can probably see where I'm headed. My first goal when counseling a couple is to help them identify their most important emotional needs. Once those needs are identified, I help them learn to meet those needs for each other. I want them to make the largest deposits possible into each other's Love Banks. If all goes well, they begin making those large deposits and eventually they are in love with each other.

When I first began using this approach to saving marriages, I didn't know what made people the happiest in marriage -- I didn't know what emotional needs would be the most important. So I

had to ask hundreds of men and women that question, "What could your spouse do for you that would make you the happiest?"

As spouses explained what they wanted most, I classified their desires into emotional need categories. And almost all those I interviewed described one or more of only ten emotional needs as being most important to them (admiration, affection, conversation, domestic support, family commitment, financial support, honesty and openness, physical attractiveness, recreational companionship and sexual fulfillment). Very few ever named a most important emotional need that was not included in this list of ten.

I also made a revolutionary discovery that helped me understand why husbands and wives tended **not** to meet each other's most important emotional needs. Whenever I asked couples to list their needs according to what they needed most, men would list them one way and women the opposite way. Of the 10 emotional needs, the five listed as most important by men were usually the five least important for women, and vice-versa.

What an insight! It is no wonder that husbands and wives have so much difficulty meeting each other's needs: They lack empathy. They are willing to do for each other what they appreciate the most, but it turns out that their efforts are misdirected. What they appreciate the most, their spouses appreciate the least!

Pay close attention to this next point I am about to make, because it is one of the most misunderstood aspects of my entire program.

Everyone is unique. While men **on average** pick a particular set of five emotional needs as their most important and women on average pick another set of five, any given man or woman can and do pick various combinations of the ten. So even though I know the most important emotional needs of the average man and woman, I don't know the emotional needs of any particular husband or wife.

I'm in the business of trying to save all marriages, not just average marriages, so I encourage each couple to ignore what I say about average male and female needs and identify those that are unique to them. That way each spouse's list of the most important emotional needs reflects what he or she appreciates the most. When they meet those needs for each other, they create the greatest happiness, and trigger a mutual feeling of love.

These conclusions are reflected in my book [*His Needs, Her Needs*](#) where I explain how couples build romantic love by learning how to meet each other's most important emotional needs. Readers are encouraged to identify these needs by using the Emotional Needs Questionnaire that I provide at the back of the book. Then I encourage them to become experts at meeting those needs. This questionnaire is also available to you on this website. Just click, [Emotional Needs Questionnaire](#), to discover the most important emotional needs for you and your spouse. Be sure to print two copies so you and your spouse each have one.

Before you fill out the questionnaire read a short description of each need that I've provided for you so that you will be accurate in the choices you make.

- [Affection](#)
- [Sexual Fulfillment](#)
- [Conversation](#)
- [Recreational Companionship](#)
- [Honesty and Openness](#)
- [Physical Attractiveness](#)
- [Financial Support](#)
- [Domestic Support](#)
- [Family Commitment](#)
- [Admiration](#)

Once you have identified each other's most important emotional needs, your next step is to learn how to meet them. I've written several Q&A columns to help you achieve that objective. Listed below are some of those columns.

Affection

[How to Meet the Need for Affection](#)

Sexual Fulfillment

[How to Meet the Need for Sexual Fulfillment](#)

[Changing a Willingness to Make Love into a Desire to Make Love](#)

[How to Overcome Pain During Intercourse?](#)

[How to Overcome Sexual Aversion?](#)

[What to Do When Your Spouse Has an Addiction to Pornography](#)

Conversation

[What to do When Your Conversation Becomes Boring and Unpleasant](#)

Recreational Companionship

[Why Should a Couple Be Together When They Are the Happiest?\(Part 1\)](#)

[What to Do When Your Recreational Companionship Becomes Boring and Unpleasant \(Part 1\)](#)

[What to Do When Your Recreational Companionship Becomes Boring and Unpleasant \(Part 2\)](#)

Before we leave the very important topic of how to make Love Bank deposits, I want you to understand how important it is for you to schedule enough time to meet each other's most important emotional needs. You simply will not do a very good job making each other happy

while doing something else or in your spare time--you need to schedule quality time each week to give each other your undivided attention. I make this crucial point in the **Policy of Undivided Attention**.