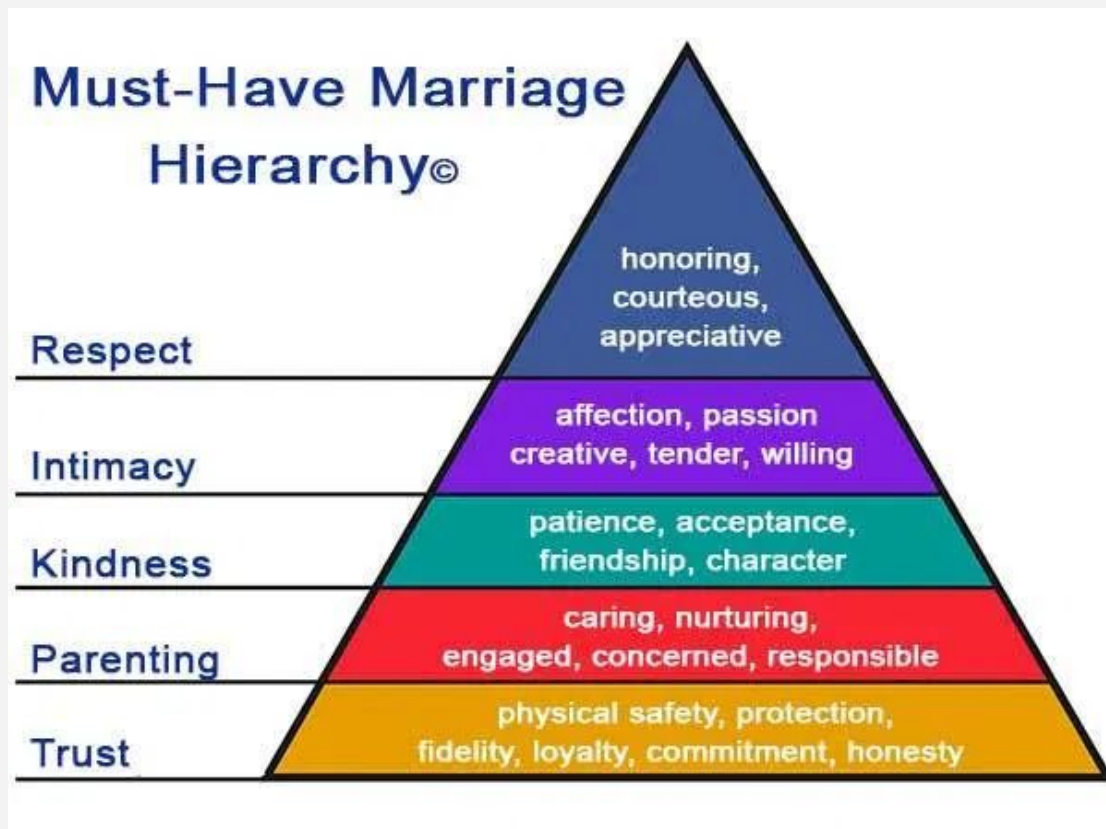


MUST-HAVE PYRAMID

I.D. YOUR RELATIONSHIP PRIORITIES



Introduction

We all have distinct relationship values, priorities and must-haves. But most of us don't know them. This is because while we spend all our time in relationship, we rarely spend our time thinking about what we want, and more importantly, what we need in our relationships.

This Must-Have Worksheet will help you to identify and define what values you find essential for your romantic relationships.

What are Relationship Must-Haves?

The idea behind Must-Haves is simple, yet profound. We each have limits (unique to us), inherent in our psyche and our gut, which regulate our behaviors and how we are willing to be treated. These behaviors I call our Relationship Must Haves - they are what we must-have within our relationship in order for us to feel safe, loved, and respected.

This is not a “wish-list” of things we want in our partner. No. These are the character traits that we require, which when not present, marks the end of our relationship.

From a positive perspective, they help us define when things are going well within our connection. When present, we can relax, enjoy, and experience the happiness of a relationship going well. And although they don't define our “perfect” relationship, they certainly do define a good one.

From a negative perspective, they define for us the behaviors, treatment, and feelings that, when violated, are a signal that our relationship is in trouble. When our must-haves are absent, we know something is wrong, and needs immediate attention.

Prioritizing Must-Haves

In addition to defining your must-haves, it helps to prioritize them as well. And, specifically in a hierarchical manner - from foundational must haves, to upper-level must haves that while important, may not elicit the same level of emergency response as lower level must haves.

The Must-Have Pyramid

To this end, I have created what I call the Must-Have Pyramid. This pyramid includes only my five most pressing must-haves, and arranges them from bottom to top, with the most important on bottom.

#1 Trust

In my case, the first and foremost relationship Must-Have is trust. I just will not be in a relationship with somebody whom I cannot trust is honoring our basic marriage vows of fidelity. Additionally, if I feel unsafe (physically) with this person, then our relationship is not really a relationship at all - time to pull the plug. For me, trust also includes loyalty - such as not taking sides with others in public - (can you imagine?), and having my back.

#2 Responsible Parenting

The next most important must-have for me is that my spouse is responsible with our children. We both are not perfect (especially me). But, at the end of the day, I 100% know that my wife is extremely cautious with our children. If anything were to happen, heaven forbid, it would never, ever be due to reckless abandonment or neglect. If I didn't have this confidence in her, we couldn't be married. The consequences would destroy our love.

#3 Loving Kindness

There is no marriage in a climate of constant fighting, negativity, and ill-will. Without loving-kindness, the home becomes a war-zone and, well, no thank you. This is not to say that fights and arguments don't happen. But they need to be the exception and not the rule.

#4 Intimacy

There are those who say that physical intimacy is what distinguishes your spouse from a roommate. I'm one of those people. And yet, I put intimacy as the fourth most important must-have. This is because as important as it is, it does not come before fidelity, my children or kindness. Also, I firmly believe that if the bottom three are strong, intimacy will certainly be possible.

#5 Respect

Treating each other respectfully is key to having a connecting, loving relationship. It belongs on the pyramid, for sure, but closer to the top. It is also much harder to objectively quantify.

Defining your Relationship Values

Time to create your own version. Here are some questions you can ask yourself:

1. How do I define a marriage relationship? How does it differ from a loving friend?

| | | |
|---------------|-----------|--------------|
| Open | Trust | Spiritual |
| Loving | Intimacy | Affectionate |
| Communication | Respect | Sex |
| Honor | Fun | Freedom |
| Loyalty | Forgiving | Forever |
| Safe | Exciting | Passionate |
| Friendship | Honesty | Sacrifice |

2. In what ways must I be treated in order to feel loved, connected with & happy?

| | | |
|----------------|-------------|------------|
| Loved | Trust | Understood |
| Intimacy | Respect | Patience |
| Connected with | Appreciated | Kindness |
| Affectionate | Desired | Forgiving |

3. In what ways do I refuse to be treated? Where are my limits? When do I say "G'BYE!"

| | | |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Infidelity | Sexless | Dismissive |
| Lied to | Coldness | Under-prioritized |
| Emotional Abuse | Stonewalling | Selfishly |
| Verbal Abuse | Criticized | Non-committal |
| Physical Violence | Humiliated | Passive-Aggressive |
| Alcoholism | Irresponsible | Lazy |
| Gambling | Disrespected | Weak |

My Boundaries

Next, take a moment to synthesize how you would whittle it down to five most important values. An easy way to do this is to ask yourself - what's more important to me - A or B? So for instance, if you said that both having a patient partner and not being cheated on are a must haves, which one would you say is most important?

Boundaries go on Bottom.

At this point, for most people, we realize that our boundaries are really where our limits lie. So given the above question, most of us would put infidelity as a foundational definition of marriage, and having a patient partner as very important, but not even close.

Another way of thinking about it is leaning-in to how you would feel if this must-have was violated. So, most of us would have much more intense feelings of hurt, pain, and despair if we found out our partner actually cheated on us as opposed to losing their patience. Our boundaries turn out to be more foundational in this exercise - from this perspective of our relationship - than some of our other values, such as being kind, passionate or patient.

Take a moment and start writing on the lines below. #5 is your foundational values.

1. _____

2. _____

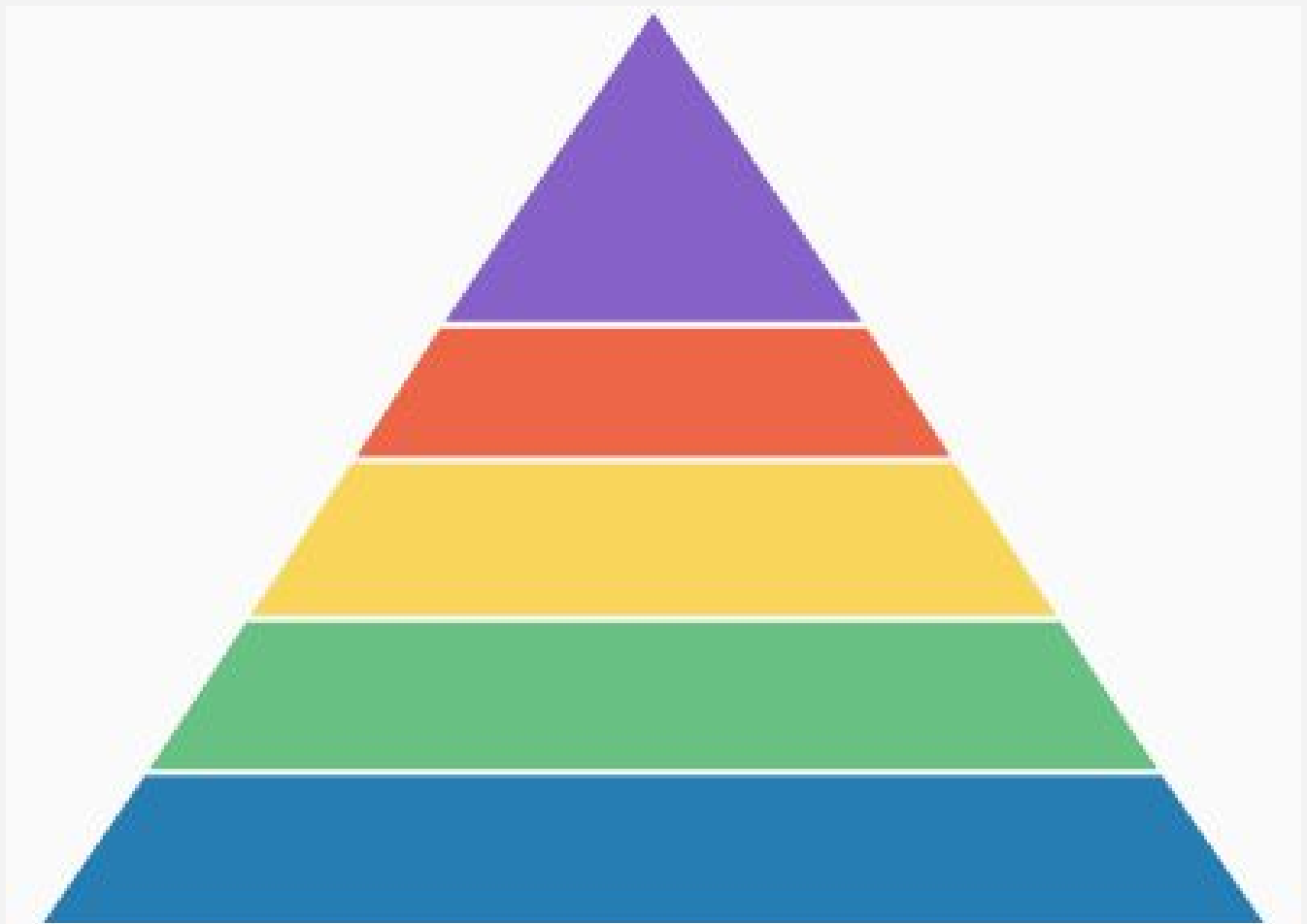
3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Your Must Have Pyramid

Now it's time to have some fun, and write in your own Must Have Pyramid!



Congratulations!

Also, note that while the Must-Have Pyramid helps you define what you want in your relationship and more importantly what you will not tolerate, it also helps you decide what you are willing to forgive. Anything not on the pyramid gets tossed out!

Putting Must-Haves in Action

Now that you have your pyramid, what's next? In addition to the benefit of identifying your core needs and relationship values, there are a few different ways to use your pyramid.

#1 When Your Must-Haves are Violated

It is easy to go epileptic when our values and boundaries are crossed. And some of us do. But this too is dysfunctional, and this is why our pyramid is so helpful. We are able to easily access if the "infraction" we felt fell out on our pyramid at all. Forgot to put the dishes away? PASS. Wasn't fun at the party? PASS. Dressed funny for the meeting? PASS. Late for dinner? Pass. Sexting other women? RED-ALERT.

But most things are not black and white - usually it is some shade of grey and there are a lot of factors, including perhaps our misunderstanding, in every situation. That's why my general rule (general) is that if I believe a violation occurred, I don't make any serious decisions about the state of our relationship for the next six months. During this time, I can work on the issue with my partner, practice patience, and forgiveness. In many cases, big deals turn into little deals over time, and often resolve themselves.

#2 Learn to Let Go

One of the best features of the must-have pyramid is it provides a clear blueprint of all the types of things I can work on letting go. Oh, it feels so good just saying it! After this exercise, you should have a clear understanding of what is really important in your relationship, and what really isn't. Practicing the art of letting go will bring much relief to your life together and give you both peace of mind. If it's not in my 5, I'm not interested!

#3 Become your own Must-Haves

Perhaps one of the most important opportunities with your Pyramid is the challenge of you embodying the very values you find so precious. This alone will foster a wonderful relationship and partnership. Ask yourself - to what extent do I exemplify the values I profess are so important? How am I showing up this way for my partner? You may be surprised at yourself, and see ways to improve your relationship right now. Enjoy!

Must Have Worksheet - Relationship Work

Based on your Must Have Marriage Pyramid, on a scale of lowest -> highest (10), in what ways does your current relationship *already* reflect your values?

TRUST _____

PARENTING _____

KINDNESS _____

INTIMACY _____

RESPECT _____

If any areas fell below a 5, they may need to be examined more closely. You can do this by yourself, with a friend, or a coach/counselor.

What 5 things can you say are going really, really well in your relationship?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

What areas need help?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Congratulations! You now know what areas are going well, and which areas you both need help!

Must Have Worksheet - Personal Work

Based on your Must Have Marriage Pyramid, on a scale of lowest -> highest (10), in what ways does your **personal behavior** *already* reflect your values?

TRUST _____

PARENTING _____

KINDNESS _____

INTIMACY _____

RESPECT _____

If any areas fell below a 5, they may need to be examined more closely. You can do this by yourself, with a friend, or a coach/counselor.

What 5 things are you doing really well in your relationship?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

In What areas do you need help?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Congratulations! You now know where to exert your efforts on yourself, and where you can take pride in doing a job well done!



If you need help in your relationship, marriage, or your situation, give me a call.

As a licensed, trained Marriage & Family Therapist, I can help you recreate intimacy, trust and well-being.

Don't wait until it's too late. Schedule a [Free Clarity Call](#) now, to discuss how we can work together.

~Dovid Feldman 🙏

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