



## Inventory: common areas of conflict for couples

Couple counselors have identified five areas that most frequently cause conflict in partner relationships—**money, time, family, sex, and mess**.

1. Read through the sets of questions for each of these five areas below.
2. Choose one area where you are experiencing some conflict, and one area where things are going relatively well.
3. Take time to celebrate your successes in each of these two areas. What is your partner doing well? What are you doing well?
4. Take time to discuss how you could make things better in each area. Identify something you can do to improve things. Identify something you would like to ask your partner to do.

1. **Money**—How well do we agree about how money is spent or not spent, saved or not saved, planned or not planned. Are we comfortable about our relative contributions to family income? What is a priority in our spending and what is not? Who worries more about money?

2. **Time** — Is there satisfaction with the balance between work and play, time with family and time with friends, time together and time apart?

3. **Family** — How well are we doing at raising and/or supporting children? How well are doing in our relationships with parents and siblings, stepchildren, nieces and nephews, in-laws?

4. **Sex** — Do we have mutually satisfying intimate activities? Is there a disparity between us in terms of amount of sexual desire; and if so, how well do we deal with it? Are we able to communicate our needs, express our hurts, relish and celebrate the pleasure we share? What is the balance between being playful or serious, safe or dangerous, exploratory or familiar?

5. **Mess** —Are we happy with how we share the maintenance of our physical space? Who is more likely to be bothered by things being dirty? Who is more likely to be bothered by things being untidy?