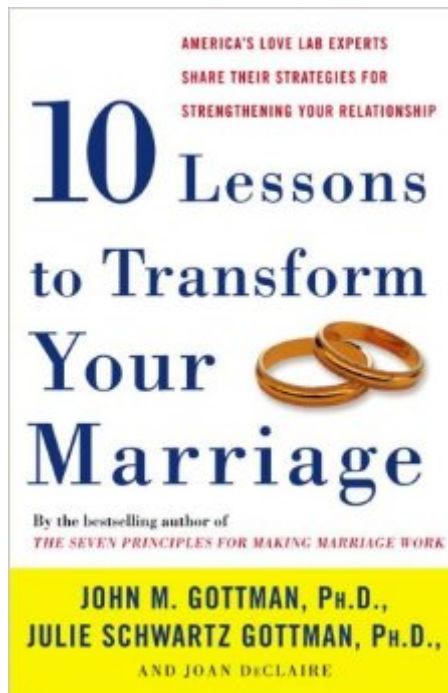


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# Ten Lessons To Transform Your Marriage: America's Love Lab Experts Share Their Strategies For Strengthening Your Relationship



## Synopsis

In *Ten Lessons to Transform Your Marriage*, marital psychologists John and Julie Gottman provide vital tools "scientifically based and empirically verified" that you can use to regain affection and romance lost through years of ineffective communication. In 1994, Dr. John Gottman and his colleagues at the University of Washington made a startling announcement: Through scientific observation and mathematical analysis, they could predict "with more than 90 percent accuracy" whether a marriage would succeed or fail. The only thing they did not yet know was how to turn a failing marriage into a successful one, so Gottman teamed up with his clinical psychologist wife, Dr. Julie Schwartz Gottman, to develop intervention methods. Now the Gottmans, together with the Love Lab research facility, have put these ideas into practice. What emerged from the Gottmans' collaboration and decades of research is a body of advice that's based on two surprisingly simple truths: Happily married couples behave like good friends, and they handle their conflicts in gentle, positive ways. The authors offer an intimate look at ten couples who have learned to work through potentially destructive problems "extramarital affairs, workaholism, parenthood adjustments, serious illnesses, lack of intimacy" and examine what they've done to improve communication and get their marriages back on track. Hundreds of thousands have seen their relationships improve thanks to the Gottmans' work. Whether you want to make a strong relationship more fulfilling or rescue one that's headed for disaster, *Ten Lessons to Transform Your Marriage* is essential reading. From the Hardcover edition.

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## Customer Reviews

The authors operate a Love Lab for troubled marriages. By miking and video taping the couples, the authors analyze the language and attitudes for their impact on resolving the problems, both in a negative and positive sense. This book follows the problem resolution process for ten couples that have issues that others are likely to have, like too much work, infidelity, emotional distance, irritability and nagging, dominance of kids, humdrum existence, etc. This book is really a follow up to the earlier "Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work" by the same author. But it is far more practical. In each chapter devoted to a particular couple and problem, the language used is analyzed in a step-by-step manner. The authors become involved by directing the conversations in a direction of complaining gently without criticizing and deescalating negative behaviors. The earlier "principles" are invoked but in the context of the current situation. Follow up sessions are supplied in some cases. The authors seem to have stepped back a bit from the self-promotion that oozed from the earlier work. It is a better book. The main criticism of the book is the assumption that all marriages can be made to work. Some cannot despite civility.

When it comes to books on marriage and relationships, I rely on the Gottman books, where the concepts were gleaned from scientific observation and statistical analysis, rather than pop psychology and opinion. For several years, I have been giving "The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work" (SP) as wedding gifts, and now I include "10 Lessons to Transform Your Marriage" (10L) as well. Although SP and 10L cover much of the same material, SP explains the concepts in more depth with exercises to apply the material, whereas 10L explains the concepts in a concise yet functional manner, and is heavier on application. I find both books equally valuable and highly recommend one read both--SP first, then 10L, although 10L is perfectly usable as a stand-alone book. In 10L, we're introduced to 10 couples, each with a different issue. One couple, for example, has a marriage that's so child-centered they're not taking adequate time for themselves. Another couple lives a parallel existence in the house as roommates who don't get along very well. The Gottmans devote a chapter to each couple's problem. In each chapter, there's an explanation of the problem along with a transcript of the couple having a conversation (in some cases an argument!) about their issue. To the right of the dialog, the Gottmans comment on what they notice, with plus or minus signs, a very helpful feature that helps the reader integrate the principles into a real-life situation. After the initial dialog, the Gottmans comment on what the husband and wife did that was helpful or detrimental, and how they can improve. The couple was then sent back to have a second conversation, and in each case the couple made improvements on how they dealt with the issue.

Each chapter finishes with more comments from the Gottmans, along with an update on the couple (usually one year later), and an exercise for reader to do with her or his partner. As I read the dialogs, I covered up the Gottmans' comments and thought my own, then checked to see what the Gottmans thought. Soon I was analyzing the dialog like a pro, which helped me see how to apply the concepts to real life at a deeper level than I gained from just reading SP and John Gottman's earlier book, "Why Marriages Succeed or Fail." One thing I like is that the Gottmans get at the deeper meaning behind some seemingly mundane conflicts. One couple was discussing the time constraints of childcare and volunteer work, but the deeper issue was that they failed to recognize each others' dreams. Unlike the Gottmans, I thought several of the couples were too incompatible to be married. One husband lost their retirement money in a bad deal, had an affair, and routinely minimized his wife's feelings in conversation. I thought this man is too self-centered and immature to be married. However, the Gottmans worked with this couple who reported a year later that on a scale from 1 to 10, they've improved from a 4 or 5 to a 9. Granted the Gottmans didn't use cases where they couple had separated or divorced by the follow-up period. I think many couples are too incompatible to be married in the first place. However, if both parties take the time to diligently learn and apply the Gottman communication and relationship skills, they'll at the very least be less miserable than they were to begin with. I think the Gottman material is so valuable, you could randomly select any two adults from the phone book, and as long as neither is a sociopath, both could apply the Gottman principles and live together civilly for a year or more!

As a marriage and family therapist, I rely most heavily on the work of John Gottman, because he is one of the only authors/relationship experts who uses scientific research to identify the components of successful and unsuccessful relationships. *Ten Lessons To Transform Your Marriage* is an engaging format to present his "Love Lab" research findings and related relationship advice. The ten "lessons" were presented through ten different couples, and it was easy to become engrossed in the story of each couple as they talked through their relationship issues. Embedded within each couple's conversation are clues about how they interact and connect, and the dynamics underlying their conflict. By following these conversations and the authors interventions, readers will learn how to uncover the deeper issues underlying ongoing conflicts, as well as how to use productive communication tools to transform relationship issues into relationship improvement and positive change. What I like most about this book is its message that relationships can be healed and changed even in the face of significant pain, hurt and disappointment. John Gottman's work illustrates that relationship success is not just about a couple's compatibility or about never hurting

each other, but instead about open, effective communication. This is a great "reality check" for all couples. This book will ideally give a lot of couples hope about how to transform their relationship problems into fulfillment and satisfaction through the right kind of communication.

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