

The Partners in Living Paradigm

Andrew L. Miser, Ph.D.
Elysian Enterprises
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Martha F. Miser, M.A.
ING Group
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

The Partners in Living model is a paradigm for generating partnership, possibility and passion in a committed relationship. It provides couples with new perspectives and ways of thinking that can enhance their experience of partnership in their lives. Specifically, the Partners in Living paradigm rests on the principle that each person in the committed relationship, as well as the relationship itself, is naturally creative, resourceful and whole. In the context of the committed relationship, there is nothing wrong, nothing needs to be fixed and everything is discussable. Couples in a true partnership are committed to a fulfilled and co-created relationship and have the capacity to invent empowering perspectives that bring life, love and laughter to their relationship. The contexts of the Partners in Living paradigm are commitment, listening, play, appreciation, and alignment. The Partners in Living paradigm provides a couple in a committed relationship access to experiencing a partnership that is active, enduring and full of vigor each and every day.

Partners in Living

The Partners in Living model is a paradigm for generating partnership, possibility and passion in a committed relationship. It provides couples with new perspectives and ways of thinking that can enhance their experience of being partners each and every day.

The Dictionary defines partners as, “persons who take part, share or engage in some activity in common.” Partners can be a husband and wife, two people dancing together, players on the same sports team or persons engaged in the same business enterprise. Being partners implies a joining together in some enterprise, activity, or common purpose. Synonyms for partners are co-owners, associates, colleagues, allies, companions, mates or spouses.

The definition of living is “being alive, having life or being not dead.” Living is not only the state of being alive, but it also implies a way of living that is active, enduring and full

of vigor. Synonyms for living are alive, animated and vigorous. Living as a noun, as in what a couple does for their living, implies livelihood, venture, undertaking or enterprise.

The Partners in Living paradigm assumes that every couple that enters into a committed relationship does so with the hope of having a successful partnership that is alive and vigorous over many years. Few committed couples, if any, intend for their marriage or relationship to become unhappy or disintegrate at some point in the future. This is also not the hope of the couple's family and friends who witness their exchange of vows. Two people who enter into a committed relationship or a marriage do so to be partners in living.

The statistics on marriage, however, present a startling reality. Research on marriage success in the United States in 1994 revealed that more than half of all first marriages end in divorce and second marriages end almost 60% of the time (Gottman, 1994). In his systematic study of marriage, John Gottman (1994) identified factors that influence the success and failure of marriage. In particular, his research on 2000 couples found that common sense or conventional wisdom about successful marriage is "dead wrong." He found that conflict is not necessarily unhealthy especially when it airs issues, grievances and complaints. In other words, how well a couple interacts to resolve issues, discuss problems, negotiate with each other and plan for the future is one of the best ways to diagnose the health of the relationship. Additionally, Gottman (1994) found that he could predict with 94% accuracy which couples were headed for divorce based solely on the couples' viewpoints of their marital history and their current perspectives on their marriage. Overall, the quality of a couple's skills in coping, adapting, problem solving and negotiation were found to be important in dealing with life's demands and crucial to the longevity of their committed relationship.

The Partners in Living model of committed relationship is focused on the quality of a couple's relationship. The model rests on the perspective that partners in living are two persons who see themselves as equals and who commit to themselves forming a long-term alliance, relationship or marriage for the purpose of living together in the fulfillment of possibility, partnership and passion.

The Foundations of Partners in Living

There are five foundations in the Partners in Living model of a committed relationship:

1. Each person in the committed relationship is naturally creative, resourceful and whole.¹ There is nothing wrong with either person. The two persons in the relationship see themselves as equals and peers with one another.

¹ Holding another person as "creative, resourceful and whole" is a central cornerstone of the model of co-active coaching, a paradigm of professional coaching developed by Whitworth, Kimsey-House, & Sandahl (1998).

2. The committed relationship is naturally creative, resourceful and whole as well. There is nothing wrong or needing to be fixed in the partnership. Together the couple brings sufficient resources and capabilities for having a successful partnership.
3. Everything in the context of the committed relationship is an expression of that partnership. Everything is discussable.
4. Partners in living are committed to a fulfilled and co-created relationship of possibility, partnership and passion.
5. Partners in living have the capacity to invent many empowering contexts and perspectives that bring life, love and laughter to their relationship. The specific created contexts of the Partners in Living paradigm are commitment, listening, play, appreciation, and alignment.

Partners in Living are Creative, Resourceful and Whole

The perspectives or the ways in which a couple views their life together have great impact on the quality of their relationship. Some couples view their lives together through a joint perspective that they are sharing an exciting adventure. There are couples that view their relationship as hard work requiring much effort, while other couples see their relationship as easy and carefree. Still, other couples view their relationship as being a problem that needs to be fixed. These perspectives are not necessarily permanent; in fact, couples can find themselves shifting perspectives about their relationship at different points in their marriage. The point is that whatever perspective the couple has adopted for their lives and relationship will impact their experience of living and shape the very reality they share at that time.

In the Partners in Living paradigm, each person begins with the perspective that they, as individuals and their relationship, are creative, resourceful and whole. There is nothing wrong and nothing to be fixed. Each person sees themselves as the origin or the “author” of their lives and relationship. In this framework, a couple can be generative and creative, capable of being, doing and having whatever they are willing to commit themselves to. They can be resourceful, imaginative, competent, effective and enterprising in dealing with their circumstances in life. In addition, they hold themselves as being intrinsically whole with nothing missing or needing to be added.

For two people in a committed relationship to intentionally adopt a perspective that there is nothing inherently wrong with each other or their relationship is a bold and courageous act. Consciously viewing each other as equals and one’s partnership as fulfilling and healthy generates a possibility for two people to share an extraordinary life together over

the long-term. What becomes possible is “true partnership” as a powerful perspective for the relationship.

This perspective could be viewed as the container in which the relationship is held and gives meaning to all the content and the “stuff” in their lives. This perspective is co-created by each person by declaring: “I unconditionally accept you and our relationship.” By making such a declaration, each person experiences being free to be naturally self-expressed, to have a relationship that is whole and to embrace the viewpoint that there is nothing inherently wrong with their lives. It is a perspective from which they can create their lives and to which they can return when life is not working as well as they would like.

This perspective of true partnership allows the couple to shift from perceiving “problems” as flaws in their relationship to a collaborative inquiry into concerns or issues when they arise. Breakdowns or areas that are not working are viewed as normal occurrences which require a couple to take the time to set things right again. When a couple operates from mutual acceptance of each other and the relationship, they are able to powerfully focus on the problem or issue at hand, avoid assessing the issue as a weakness in the partnership and maintain a commitment to discern what may be missing or not working.

A true partnership is grounded in a set of shared core values that form the background of the relationship. From here, the couple is able to examine their commitment to what they are doing, their points of view about what is happening or their ways of being about the problem or each other. They also might communicate feelings that are difficult, recreate their agreements with each other or forgive each other for what they have done that might have been hurtful.

A committed couple is always looking to move the relationship forward in the direction of workability for each other and for the relationship itself. In the background of a true partnership is the view that, for the relationship to work, things must work for both partners in the relationship. How does a couple achieve that?

Many couples early in their relationship set up a model of responsibility that could be called 50% - 50%. If each person in the partnership does their 50%, then all 100% of what needs to be done gets accomplished and presumably both partners will be happy and satisfied. The 50% - 50% model is an additive model and based in fairness. While this model appears to have its merits, it is insufficient to creating a true partnership. As soon as one of the partners does not do “their” 50% in the relationship, the other partner may experience a sense of unfairness and of being taken advantage of by the other person. It is a model that is based on what each person is doing in a relationship, rather than based on who each person is being for the relationship.

A committed relationship requires a model of 100% - 100% responsibility. Responsibility in this framework is the act of owning one’s own happiness and creating

one's responsibility for it by saying: "I am completely responsible for my happiness. And while I am not responsible for my partner's happiness, I am committed to it." The corollary to this is also very powerful: Each person is responsible for his or her unhappiness and not responsible for the other's unhappiness. This clear understanding of responsibility, together with a commitment to each other's happiness are important aspects of workability in a partnership.

If both partners are responsible for their own happiness and committed to the happiness of each other, who is ultimately responsible for the workability of the relationship as a whole? Both partners are. Both partners naturally commit themselves to being 100% responsible for the workability in their committed relationship. Within a true partnership, each person is responsible for and committed to the whole relationship. Each person views himself or herself as being the relationship.

Everything is Discussable

In the context of a true partnership, everything inside the relationship becomes included and is an expression of that relationship. Everything is viewed as important and can be discussed. All areas of life and the relationship can be examined and there is nothing too small or seemingly insignificant to talk about. Some of the most valuable lessons in living together can be found in discussing such things as how to open a tuna fish can, who is going to take the letter to the post office to be mailed or who is going to pick up the take-out dinner for that evening. Every feeling, point of view, opinion or judgment about something is included in the relationship. Political interests, recreational preferences, the management of money, sexual expressiveness, household roles and responsibilities and parenting styles all become important in the context in the relationship.

Couples with differing political viewpoints, standards of cleanliness or sexual interests learn to discuss and resolve the differences directly or handle the differences by accepting and including them. By including and effectively dealing with all that is in the marriage, there is nothing that "should not be or belong" in the relationship. When a couple can't talk about something that at least one of the partners feels is important, the freedom of self-expression in their relationship diminishes. The permission and the space they give each other to be themselves closes down. To have the permission in a relationship to talk about anything, no matter how important or seemingly insignificant it may be, is a real gift couples give each other.

By consciously adopting the framework that everything in the committed relationship is potentially important, a couple is able learn to embrace all of life as they learn to live together. Rather than not talking about things or avoiding some subjects, each partner can say what they need to say without their partner minimizing its importance. Couples who can discuss anything keep returning to the experience of being creative, resourceful and whole without having some issue, no matter how big or small, get in the way of that

experience. Inside this context everything in life becomes “grist for the mill” for partners in living.

The Fulfillment of Partners in Living

Whitworth, Kimsey-House, and Sandahl (1998) wrote, “A fulfilling life is a valued life.” Every committed couple has their own unique expression of what is important to them, what they value and what fulfills them as individuals and as a relationship.

In his research with couples, Gottman (1994) found there was great variability in what couples value and find important. Some couples value mutual understanding, validation, communication, openness, compromise, friendship, displaying affection, sharing time together and the “we-ness” of their relationship. Such couples value respect for each other, being committed to the relationship and equality in the partnership. Other couples, however, value the freedom to express different viewpoints, emotional expressiveness and passion. These couples value individuality in the relationship, honesty, independence as well as equality. Still other couples value minimizing conflict, sharing common ground in the marriage, peace at home, harmony and autonomy.

The Partners in Living paradigm starts with the premise that each couple has their own unique expression for what they value and what they find important. The Partners in Living model rests on three central aspects of a couple’s life that impact the fulfillment of a shared life together. These three central aspects are possibility, partnership and passion for living. Refer to Diagram 1.

Possibility: “The quality or condition of being possible and capable of existing or being in the future. Possibility is a future probable reality, likelihood or potentiality.”

Couples who have a true partnership experience being able to co-create a vision of their lives together and a possible future that give them a sense of direction and purpose for their lives. Being able to co-invent a desired future and to work as a team together to have that vision allows couples to live fulfilling lives.

Partners in living set aside time to share what they see is possible for each other and for their partnership. Conversations for possibility are conversations in which a couple can invent ways of being together that are generative and creative for their lives and their relationship. Couples learn to speak with commitment to each other, not just stating what they want, but also saying what they stand for and what they declare as possible for themselves. Through co-creating declarations for the future, a couple has a shared stake in the quality of their lives and real power in effecting their future. “We (I) declare the possibility of being loving and generous.” “We (I) declare we are each creative, resourceful and whole.” “We (I) declare the possibility of being partners in creating a life together filled with an adventure, wonder and miracles.”

Such co-created declarations express a couple’s commitment to what they value and hold dear in their relationship. In this way, a couple gains access to inventing their lives on an ongoing basis. One of the most intimate activities a couple can engage in is having a committed conversation for the vision of their partnership. Permission to dream, sharing desires for the future, expressing support for each other’s growth and development, brainstorming ideas and inventing the future together are all expressions of a co-created vision. Couples learn to understand the magical quality of being able to say what they want without fear of limitation, judgment, disagreement or conflict. This kind of sharing can be very intimate and loving. It is an expression of the couple’s original commitment when they said in their own words, “We want to share the future with each other.”

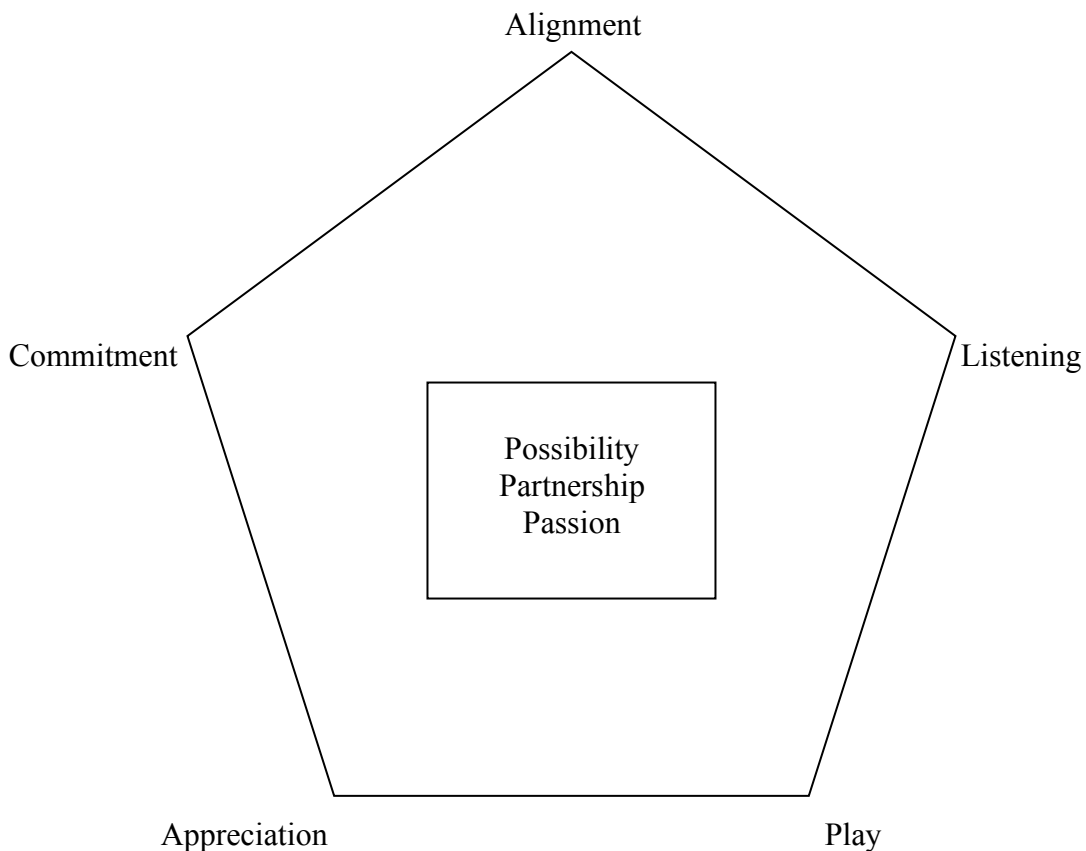


Diagram 1. The Fulfillment and Contexts of the Partners in Living Paradigm

Partnership: “The state of being a partner, engaging in some activity, interest, association, relationship, or enterprise jointly with another.”

True partners share similar values and a vision for their life and relationship together. Partnership is greater than a co-created vision, however, as it also requires the sharing of all the day-to-day, logistical, how-are-we-going-to-handle-everything-we’ve-got-to-do

kinds of demands. Partners must sort out who is going to do what and when and, like a great pair of jugglers, throwing bowling pins back and forth to each other or like two trapeze artists, flying through the air, catching each other 50 feet above the circus ring, their partnership requires daily coordination and committed action.

When there is effective communication, action and coordination, balls don't get dropped and people do not fall into the net. Successful coordinated action creates the kind of daily activity that leads to a shared sense of satisfaction, competence and teamwork. The experience of partnership is often challenged when communication breaks down and coordinated action falters. When this occurs, a couple who is committed to partnership will examine and communicate about what is not working, who they are being in the matter and what they each did that led to ineffectiveness. Effectiveness is enhanced by focusing on what is working and not working rather than who is wrong or who is to blame. Partnership is an expression of the couple's original commitment when they said in their own words, "We want to share our lives with each other."

Passion: "A strong emotion for, enthusiasm for, having a strong love for, desire for or fondness for."

In the context of the Partners in Living paradigm, partners are passionate about and being aware of the wonderful opportunity of sharing an enduring, fulfilling life together. A couple committed to living passionately is giving each other the permission to live lives they love. They won't settle for anything less.

Whitworth, Kimsey-House, and Sandahl (1998) write that individuals, who commit themselves to living a fulfilled, balanced and vital life, choose a path in life that is a "radical act." Partners, who are committed to following their dreams and to living passionately, choose a radical way of living. In today's world, there are many influences, demands, requirements, concerns, issues, etc., that compete for the daily attention of couples. It is easy to give up and to say, "Our dreams are not that important" or "What fulfills us must be put on hold." Couples committed to true partnership say "No" to resignation, cynicism and the status quo. They say "No" to their fears and their self-limiting beliefs. They say "No" to helplessness and hopelessness. Partners in living say, "Yes" to living lives they love and to loving the lives they live. They continually express a strong enthusiasm for each other, their relationship and sharing their lives together. Living passionately together is an expression of the couple's original commitment when they said in their own words, "We want to share our love with each other."

The Five Co-created Contexts of Partners in Living

Commitment: "A committing or being committed, a pledge, a vow, a stand or promise."

One of the co-created contexts of the Partners in Living paradigm is commitment. A couple who is creating life together as partners do so inside of their commitment to

themselves, each other and their relationship. Their relationship starts inside a vow, a pledge or a promise to each other and that commitment sustains the relationship over time. Partners who embark on the path toward marriage move through five distinct phases of commitment.

The first commitment two people make is the choice to have a relationship with each other. It is the phase in which the couple explores the possibility of a relationship together and asks the question, “Is this person the one?” or “Is this it?” In this phase, having a relationship occurs as possible and the couple’s choice is around whether to date or to be together in an exclusive way.

The second commitment a couple makes is the commitment to be engaged. By getting engaged, the couple states publicly their intention and promise to get married at some time in the future. It is in this phase that the possibility of being together transforms into the possibility of being in a long-term relationship or getting married. For most people who consider getting married, that future state usually implies being together over the couple’s entire life span.

The third commitment a couple makes is the saying of their marriage vows together in a public ceremony before a minister or justice of the peace. The marriage of two people is created in an exchange of vows and a declaration before a community of family and friends who promise to support the couple in their partnership. The couple gives their vows to one another promising to love and to be committed to each other in their marriage. These promises are acts of creation. The partnership itself is not fully created, though, until the minister, priest or the justice of the peace declares the marriage into existence, as in, “by virtue of the power vested in me by the State of _____, I now declare you husband and wife.” This declaration is an act of creation that brings into existence the reality that the two people are now, in fact, married. It is at this point that the possibility of being married in a long-term relationship becomes real. The possibilities of being partners in living and of having a fulfilling life together are born.

The fourth commitment a couple makes is the choice to commit themselves to the vows they made to each other when they were married. During this phase, a couple is learning to live together, learning to include everything in their relationship and learning to live as partners. Often, during the first 5 to 7 years, something happens that may challenge the commitment of the couple to stay together. Many couples discover that the glue that holds them together is, in fact, the vows they gave to each other. Whether the couple faces financial problems, extra-marital difficulties or communication issues, the couple will find themselves calling on their inner resources to renew their marital commitment over and over. This fourth choice could be called the couple’s commitment to their commitment. The reality of staying married is created in this commitment and the opportunity of living as true partners is created.

The fifth commitment the couple makes in their life together is to renew their commitment or recommit to their vows regularly. Another way to say this is that the fifth

major commitment the couple makes is making the fourth commitment each and every day. It is in making this commitment that being partners in living on the court of life becomes a reality. Each person in the marriage recognizes the opportunity of being 100% responsible for their own lives as well as the workability, the quality and well being of the relationship itself. The couple recognizes that their relationship is a created phenomenon. The couple commits themselves regularly to the fulfillment of what is possible in their lives together, to the expression of partnership in their marriage, and to the vitality of their relationship.

Being a true partnership is a way of being for the couple. It is their daily choice. The couple learns to be their word to each other every day. The couple experiences themselves as being partners on the court of life for the long haul. They are a powerful stand for themselves, each other and their marriage. They are creating the reality of being partners in living, fulfilling their marriage. They become a beacon for others who want to embark on the journey of having a committed relationship and of having a successful partnership. They are the possibility of being true partnership for the community. They are a powerful reminder that a long and fulfilling marriage is possible for everyone who chooses that path.

Alignment: “The act of bringing into a straight line, to bring into close cooperation, to ally with, to associate with or to side with.”

A second co-created context of the Partners in Living paradigm is alignment. When two people are being naturally creative, resourceful and whole, being 100% responsible for themselves and their relationship and being committed to their partnership and to sharing a vision of their life together, they are in alignment.

Partners in living are aligned in the commitment they have expressed to each other. The couple is aligned in their values, what is important to them and in the vision that they have for their lives and for their relationship. Their actions and deeds are aligned with their words and promises. When something in their life occurs that creates a misalignment or reveals something that is not working, the couple communicates and works together to resolve the issue. Alignment in a committed relationship implies that the two people are committed to the same vision and moving in a direction that not only supports each other but also the relationship.

Partners in living stand powerfully and freely together in life. In giving advice on marriage, the Prophet (by Kahlil Gibrán) says “And stand together, yet not too near together: For the pillars of the temple stand apart, and the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow.” Partners in living give each other the room and light to grow as individuals and the foundation to the reach skyward as partners. Like two pillars they are compassionately committed to the temple that is their relationship. They are aligned in being a true partnership.

Listening: “Making a conscious effort to hear, to attend closely, to pay attention, to keep one’s ear open.”

A third co-created context of the Partners in Living paradigm is listening. Listening to another human being is one of the most magnificent gifts one person can give to another. Listening to another person grants that person’s speaking, their self-expression, and their very “being-ness.” People feel enlivened when someone listens to them. People feel validated, seen, acknowledged, and in relationship with the person who is listening. By listening, a person is saying, “I see you and I am granting that you are here. I am present and attentive to your self-expression and I am listening to what you are saying.”

Listening is a much more powerful act than speaking. Nichols (1995) writes that it is through listening that a person “bears witness” to another person’s self-expression. Bearing witness implies the act of acknowledging the humanity and the contribution of the other person. The essence of listening is empathy and understanding that are achieved when a person suspends their preoccupation with their own point of view and seeks to be in the world of another person. Nichols says that when a person demonstrates a willingness to listen, they are giving the gift of understanding.

There are, in fact, three levels of listening with which each partner may engage. These three levels of listening are drawn from the model of co-active coaching, developed by Whitworth, Kimsey-House, & Sandahl (1998). The first level of listening is having one’s attention on and one’s listening tuned to one’s own personal world. Each person is listening to themselves and what they are saying to themselves at any moment of the time. They are focused on and listening to their personal concerns and worries, to what they have to do and by when, to their opinions, judgments and self-limiting beliefs and to their inner voice that says things such as, “I can’t,” “I should,” “I’ve got to” or “I don’t want to.” Attention is not significantly on anyone else or on one’s relationship.

This is perfectly normal and natural and consumes much of the time that each individual has during each day. One must learn to listen to what one needs, desires, values and hopes for. One must learn to listen for what needs to be accomplished or must be planned for. One needs to learn to listen to and take care of oneself. Listening to one’s personal world bears witness to and gives validity to one’s own world.

The second level of listening is listening to the world of one’s partner. It implies the ability to suspend one’s own preoccupation with one’s own point of view and be with the point of view or in world of the other person. Whitworth, Kimsey-House, & Sandahl (1998) call this focused listening. In a relationship, each person becomes attuned to the needs, the feelings, the views and the hopes to their partner.

In reality, a conversation is a little like dancing. Both partners are engaged together in focusing on the world of the other as well as on their own personal worlds. They are interested in how the other person is doing, how they are feeling and what is going on with their partners. Each person listens for the emotional state of their partner, is curious

about how things are for them and asks questions directly to find out how their day went, how work is going, what they are feeling, what they are in the mood for or what's on their agenda. Listening to the world of the other isn't just listening to complaints or grievances; it's listening for what could make a difference for the other person and for the relationship.

The third level of listening is listening to the world of their relationship and is attuned to the health and well being of their partnership. Is their relationship expressing what is important to them and what they value? What is not being said in the relationship? Is there a sense of possibility and hopefulness present in their relationship? Is partnership and teamwork present as well? Are personal effectiveness, freedom and power being expressed? Is there a sense of joy, passion or celebration? Is love present in the relationship?

By listening to the world of the relationship, a couple can discern what may be missing and acknowledge it, point to it and get into communication about it. Creating, maintaining and fulfilling partnership requires an investment in time and energy. By paying attention to and listening for what is going on in the foreground of the relationship (kept or broken promises, satisfying or unsatisfying interactions, etc.), the couple can tune into the source of their joy and passion. Anything not working in the foreground can be an opportunity to strengthen the foundation of the partnership itself. Each time a couple attends to their relationship and re-invests in the values that gives them their partnership, they have access to the platform from which to soar to even greater heights and more glorious vistas in their lives together.

Play: “To have fun, to amuse oneself, to make love playfully having fun; free, light action, amusement, recreation, pleasure, merrymaking, free movement, romp, jest, frolic, elbowroom or leeway.”

A fourth co-created context of the Partners in Living paradigm is play. Partners in living recognize that it is through their vigilance in attending to the health and well being of the relationship that they are able to regularly return to a sense of playfulness. Playfulness is what often attracts a couple to each other in the beginning and it is often that quality to which the couple is always returning in their lives together.

In the context of play, there is the freedom to be one's self, to be self-expressed, to be creative and to share one's playfulness with others. The context of play brings forth curiosity, experimentation, exploration, risk-taking, safety, humor, laughter and love. The couple may find that they don't have to take life so seriously, they can laugh at themselves and they can contribute to others.

The context of play allows the couple the safety to engage in creative pursuits, to learn from their actions and to share with others. Playfulness provides a perspective which does not let fearfulness rule the day. There is an awareness that problems come and problems go. Life requires teamwork with a sense of playfulness.

Over a lifetime, partners in living enjoy being with each other. They set aside time to talk, to share with each other, to resolve problems and to co-create their lives together. They also have ample time to be away from another. They are in a continual dance together and they each have freedom of movement and leeway to explore life on their terms.

While a couple's daily experience is far from always being playful, it is the created context of playfulness that can return a couple to their sense of humor, the magic of their relationship and their love for each other. Play brings fun, pleasure, frolic and magic into life's daily moments together. When partners in living have the freedom to be themselves in their relationship, at any moment, they can shift their experience of living together from burden to freedom, from challenge to joy and from significance to laughter.

Appreciation: "Grateful recognition, the act of giving thanks, the act of thinking well of, valuing, enjoying or having esteem for, sensitive awareness, recognition of worth or admiration."

A fifth co-created context of the Partners in Living paradigm is appreciation. The context of appreciation allows partners in living to be thankful for their lives and their relationship. Rarely do they take each other for granted. There is an awareness of what it has taken to create their lives together and an appreciation of themselves, each other and their relationship.

Appreciation is freely given, spontaneously expressed and openly received. It is a simultaneous recognition of a profound love. It is a loving acknowledgment of the difference each person and the relationship makes in the each other's lives. Like a fine wine, a diamond necklace or a great artist's painting, the relationship exists in a context of appreciation. The relationship and everything in it, while born and sustained out of deep co-created commitment, is experienced as a gift, freely given and freely accepted.

Appreciation is expressed through recognizing and acknowledging the gifts of each person and the gifts of the relationship. Appreciation strengthens the foundation of the partnership as it brings to light the true nature of the relationship. Appreciation is like a floodlight shining brightly, illuminating the magnificence of one's relationship and revealing the quality, the durability, the brilliance and the essence of one's partnership. It is a powerful co-created context for true partnership.

Summary

The Partners in Living model is a paradigm for committed relationship. Creating a relationship that expresses partnership in living rests on a foundation that is co-created by the couple. It is a foundation in which each person in the committed relationship creates themselves, their partner and their relationship as naturally creative, resourceful and

whole. In addition, the partners recognize that everything in their relationship is important and has validity. Partners in living are committed to a co-created relationship fulfilling possibility, partnership and passion in their lives. Partners in living co-create the contexts of commitment, alignment, listening, play and appreciation on a daily basis. The Partners in Living paradigm provides a couple in a committed relationship the access to experiencing a partnership that is active, enduring and full of vigor each and every day.

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