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## Introduction

This condensed guide is intended to help you put your relationship on a sound footing. It examines the major causes of relationship problems and guides you through the ways in which these problems can be resolved.

I am a passionate believer in relationship. When people are in a relationship which works well, they experience better health and a greater sense of satisfaction and meaning in life. When relationships are in trouble, everyone suffers - the couple, children, relatives and friends. I have seen the truth of this many times over, working with couples in my practice.

I have also seen many couples turn their relationship around, so that they now enjoy strong, healthy relationships.

On a more personal note, I have seen how a healthy, vibrant relationship with my wife, Robin, has enriched both our lives enormously. Having a good relationship didn't come automatically for us. In recent years we have been work colleagues, co-authors of several books and course leaders together. In addition we are parents to our own children and step parents to each other's adult children. All of this has required serious, committed, loving work on the relationship.

What this means is that everything in the pages which follows has been 'road-tested', not only with clients, but in my own relationship. I can personally vouch for the value of what you are about to read.

## How to use this guide

The lessons in this short guide have been proven time and again to be very powerful in helping couples build the relationship they want.

I recommend that you complete the exercises at the end of each chapter, answering the questions honestly. It is best to write the answers so you can refer back to them. One of your most useful tools in improving your relationship is a clear, honest assessment of where things stand in your relationship.

You will find it most useful to complete the exercises initially without talking about them to your partner. Sharing them later is an excellent way of working on your relationship together.

Above all, remember that this is only a guide; the real work is up to you.

## Section 1

### WHAT GOES WRONG IN RELATIONSHIP

#### Chapter 1

#### Relationships are made, they don't just happen

No matter how much you love your partner when you first get together, your relationship will not be a good one unless you both work at it.

The first stages of attraction and falling in love happen so easily and with so little effort, that it is easy to believe that the relationship will be just as effortless. You probably remember this as a delightful, carefree, blissful time. This is partly because, when we fall in love our brain is flooded with a range of feel-good chemicals. Love is the ultimate 'high', and in the rush of intense good feeling, we commit ourselves to our partner.

In time, the 'in love' stage passes. For many couples, this is when the problems begin. Often problems begin as irritations, but for most couples they grow until they take up more of the couple's time, often becoming serious enough to threaten the relationship.

I work with many couples who have reached the stage of disappointment, frustration and sometimes despair. They are questioning whether the relationship - and the partner they have chosen - is right for them. Many feel they have simply picked the wrong person, or that they have outgrown the relationship, and feel that leaving their partner and the relationship may be the only choice.

For most couples, nothing could be further from the truth! As I work through the issues with couples, most discover that the relationship can work for them - and work well. Eventually they come to realise that far from picking the wrong partner, they have picked the ideal person to be in relationship with.

If you are reading this and feeling like some of those couples, you can take heart at this point. As irritating, frustrating or upsetting as your partner seems to you at this moment, the chances are that they are exactly the right person for you and the relationship can be a very good one.

To improve the relationship, both people need to be prepared to work on the