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# Building a Great Marriage with Drs. John and Julie Gottman

# Research Shows Us That Love in a Lifetime Has Three Separate Phases

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- **PHASE 1: Falling in love** – “limerence”  
(not a necessary PHASE, but it is usual in our culture of choosing lovers rather than arranged marriages).
- **PHASE 2: Trust** – Are you there for me?
- **PHASE 3: Commitment** – Loyalty VS. Betrayal

# PHASE 1: The Physiology of Falling In Love

## Highly Selective, but can have endless shelf life (Fisher)

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- **DHEA** (dehydro-epi-androsterone), natural amphetamine high, readiness for sex; mind is going fast
- **Pheromones**, sex scents, smell and attraction; intoxication
- **Oxytocin**, touch, s/he **feels** just right to hold, the cuddle hormone; bonding, but also reduces fear **and** reduces good judgment
- **PEA** (phenyl-ethyl-amine), spikes at ovulation – regulates approach and romance, hormone of love at first sight, magnetic pull of limerence
- **Estrogen**, softness, receptivity
- **Testosterone**, aggressive sexual desire, lust, seeking novel sex
- **Serotonin**, emotional sensitivity, low irritability
- **Dopamine**, excitement, pleasure, risk taking, anticipation of reward; something wonderful is about to happen
- **Progesterone**, sedating, calming, needs to be inhibited
- **Prolactin**, reduces aggression, increases nurturance
- **Vasopressin**, monogamy molecule, aggressive possessiveness in males

# PHASE 2: Trust Is Built by Being There for One Another and Repairing Miscommunications

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- % time we are emotionally available, even generously, is 50%.
- Probability both people emotionally available at the same time is 25% (assuming independence of these events).
- So 75% is ripe ground for miscommunication, need for Repair.
- Conclusion: regrettable incidents are inevitable, since emotional connection and empathy are relatively infrequent.
- Negative affect just “happens.” So **repair is essential** for attachment security – Tronick & Gianino in moms and babies.
- More words for negativity than positivity in human languages. Negative affect stops you, positive affect accelerates you. We have to process negativity. **Negative affect contains longing.**

# PHASE 3: Will We Build Commitment – Loyalty vs. Betrayal?

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- **The Loyalty Question Is:**
  - Will you make a life-long commitment to me?
- **Or:**
  - Will you keep making negative comparisons between me and real or imagined alternatives?

# **We Defined and Validated Three “Metrics” or Ways of Measuring in Any Interaction:**

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- **Trust**
- **Fairness**
- **Betrayal**
- All three metrics need to be validated in an equation for life-long committed love.
- Measuring these metrics, combined with work by Rusbult and Glass, allowed us to create theory about what creates betrayal.

# Definition of Trust, Betrayal & Fairness Metrics

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- **Trust Metric** = Acting so as to benefit both partners, so each has partner's best interests at heart.
- **Betrayal Metric** = Acting so that relationship is a win/lose zero-sum game. One partner's benefits are the other partner's losses, and vice versa.
- **Fairness Metric** = Equal power in using both positive and negative affect to influence partner.

# The Glacial Gottman-Rusbult-Glass Cascade Toward Betrayal

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1. Turning away/dismissing, or turning against, few attunements.
2. NEGATIVE COMPs accompany turning away/against.
3. Not “there for me” becomes the common event (turning toward 33% vs 86%).
4. Flooding/ physio arousal occurs whenever Partner’s negative affect happens. Hypervigilance begins.

# The Glacial Cascade Towards Betrayal (Cont.)

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5. Conflict becomes a Negative Markov absorbing state. Repair does not work.
6. Couple avoids conflict. Suppresses negative affect. Has Blowups (Unprocessed failed bids, unprocessed fights).
7. Couple avoids self-disclosure. Has secrets from partner. A mild form of deception begins.
8. Bidding for attunement declines.

# The Glacial Cascade Toward Betrayal (Cont.)

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9. Invests less in relationship. Loneliness builds.
10. Less dependency on relationship to get needs met.  
Confiding in others, not partner.
11. Less sacrificing for relationship. **SUBSTITUTING BEGINS**, find what's not there elsewhere.
12. Maximizing partner's negative traits in one's mind.  
Defensiveness begins.

# The Glacial Cascade Toward Betrayal (Cont.)

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13. Minimizing partner's positive traits. Criticism begins. Takes no responsibility for problems.
14. "Trashing" versus "cherishing." Contempt begins. Shared Meaning erodes.
15. Trashing partner to others. Contempt builds. REAL deception builds. The Story of Us goes negative.
16. Builds resentment vs. gratitude. Sees **partner** as SELFISH. Paradoxically, trusts PARTNER less. Stonewalling starts.

# The Glacial Cascade Towards Betrayal (Cont.)

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17. Loneliness in relationship builds. Vulnerability to other relationships starts.
18. Partner refusing sex gets punished. Little sex, romance, fun, play, adventure, courtship. No sexuality love maps, no dream love maps. Low sexual desire. Porn use.
19. Fewer pro-relationship cognitions. More anti-relationship cognitions.
20. No longer denigrating alternative relationships. Starts innocent new secret liaisons.

# The Glacial Cascade Towards Betrayal (Cont.)

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21. Little fence between self & others. Reverses “walls & windows” (Shirley Glass).
22. Keeping more and more secrets from partner. Deception increases. Web of lies.
23. Actively turning toward others for needs. Seeking what’s not in relationship.
24. Crossing boundaries. Real betrayal unfolds. Deception becomes way of life. Takes more risks.