

Week 5 Assignment – Meaning, Fantasy, and Becoming a Better Partner

*With appreciation for the relationship research and insights of John Gottman,
PhD*

Purpose

This assignment is about becoming a steadier, more trustworthy partner from the inside out — regardless of what the other person does. The principles here are meant to be used for the rest of your life, in any close relationship.

PART 1 – The Inner Climate You Bring

Healthy relationships depend less on perfect communication and more on the emotional climate each person brings into the room.

Answer honestly:

When I am under stress, the climate I usually bring into the relationship is:

PART 2 – How You Turn Toward or Away

In everyday moments, partners make small choices to turn toward or away from connection.

This is not about big talks — it’s about attention.

Finish these sentences:

When my partner reaches out (directly or indirectly), I usually:

One way I could turn toward more consistently is:

PART 3 – Softening the Start (With Yourself)

Conflict often escalates based on how it starts — internally first.

Before reacting, answer:

What am I telling myself right now?

How could I soften my internal starting point before saying anything?

PART 4 – Repair Begins Inside

Repair is not about fixing your partner. It begins with recognizing your own missteps.

Finish these sentences:

When I am reactive, I tend to:

A repair I can make with myself in that moment is:

PART 5 – Taking Responsibility Without Self-Blame

Strong partners take responsibility without collapsing into shame.

Finish honestly:

One pattern I can own without attacking myself is:

What it would look like to take responsibility calmly is:

PART 6 – Becoming the Partner You Respect

This is the most important section.

Answer slowly:

If I stayed true to my values under pressure, the partner I would be is:

With respect for the lifelong contributions of John Gottman, PhD

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