

# Getting Started with Relationship Rules

**“IF YOU MUST PLAY, DECIDE ON THREE THINGS AT THE START: THE STAKES OF THE GAME, THE STAKES, AND THE QUITTING TIME.”**

**-CHINESE PROVERB**

Use these questions to begin the process of clarifying your relationship rules. This is by no means an exhaustive list. Spend some time thinking carefully about each area, then spend time writing your thoughts down so you can share them with your partner.

1. **Love.** What is love? Do you expect to love each other always? Would anything change that? What way do you show love best? What kinds of things tell you most clearly that you are loved?
2. **Work, careers, and provision of income.** Whose career or job is more is a higher priority? What are expectations around work/life balance? What steps will we take when work consistently negatively impacts our mood, our health, our relationship, or our family.
3. **Communication about problems in the relationship.** Do you want to talk these out? If so, how? What will we do if we encounter a problem that we are not able to solve on our own?
4. **Power and control.** Who do you expect will have more power and in what kinds of decisions? For example, who will control the money? Who will discipline the kids? What happens when you disagree in a key area? Who has the power now? How do you feel about that?
5. **Household tasks?** Who do you expect will do what? How much household work will each of you do in the future? How will we address it if there is an **unfair** (not unequal) distribution of labor.
6. **Sharing feelings.** How much of what you are each feeling do you expect should be shared? What should be kept private?
7. **Friendship with each other?** What is a friend? What would it mean to maintain a friendship with each other?
8. **Apologies/Forgiveness.** How important are apologizing and forgiveness in your relationship? What should each look like?
9. **Other relationships.** Which ones are okay? What are the boundaries? Friendships with the members of the opposite sex? Relationships with coworkers? When you are not together how much time spent with friends is appropriate?
10. **You sexual relationship.** Frequency? Practices? Taboos?