



4

# STYLES OF MARRIAGE

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOUR MARRIAGE  
BEFORE YOU TRY TO WORK TOGETHER.

*love + work*

lovepluswork.com

**If you and your other half are thinking about starting a business, or are working toward a specific goal together, having a great idea and knowing how to implement it is only part of the equation. The more important question is whether your relationship can handle it.**

**This ebook outlines four basic styles of marriage:**


- **My Way**
- **Horse Trading**
- **Mutual Support**
- **Partnership**

We'll give examples of behavior you might notice in each style, and point to the most effective style to help you grow closer AND achieve your common dream.

Like most everything on this planet, relationships don't fit neatly into one style. Nor do relationships stay in one style through time - couples can mature and grow just as individuals can. That said, couples tend to relate to one style more than the other three. And, depending on where you land in this spectrum, you are more or less likely to succeed at starting and running a business together.

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*The original ideas in this book are credited to Kent and Kay Hotaling, with the help of Rick and Orleen Baugh. During their many travels, these friends talked with couples all over the world and noticed the same patterns emerge. They observed four distinct styles of marriage. We are grateful for their mentorship in our marriage, as well as their research, which has helped us define our own direction together.*



**“When you make the sacrifice in marriage, you’re sacrificing not to each other but to unity in a relationship.”**

**~JOSEPH CAMPBELL**

# MY WAY

The My Way method does not have any element of conversation and/or agreement to it. It is an in-your-face ultimatum: ***“Here’s what I am going to do. You have to figure out your life in relationship to what I am going to do.”*** It may be more subtle and less confrontational, but it’s still an ultimatum style in any case.

The one who is laying down the law may or may not be aware they are communicating in this way, but you can bet their partner is. They may be annoyed at plans made without being consulted, or completely broadsided by major life decisions happening without discussion.

Again, this style may not define the entire relationship, but only some areas. It’s unlikely the couple operating mainly out of the My Way style is going to work toward any goal very well together – at least not for long. Eventually, the one who gives in will experience resentment on some level, and feel their opinion counts for little.

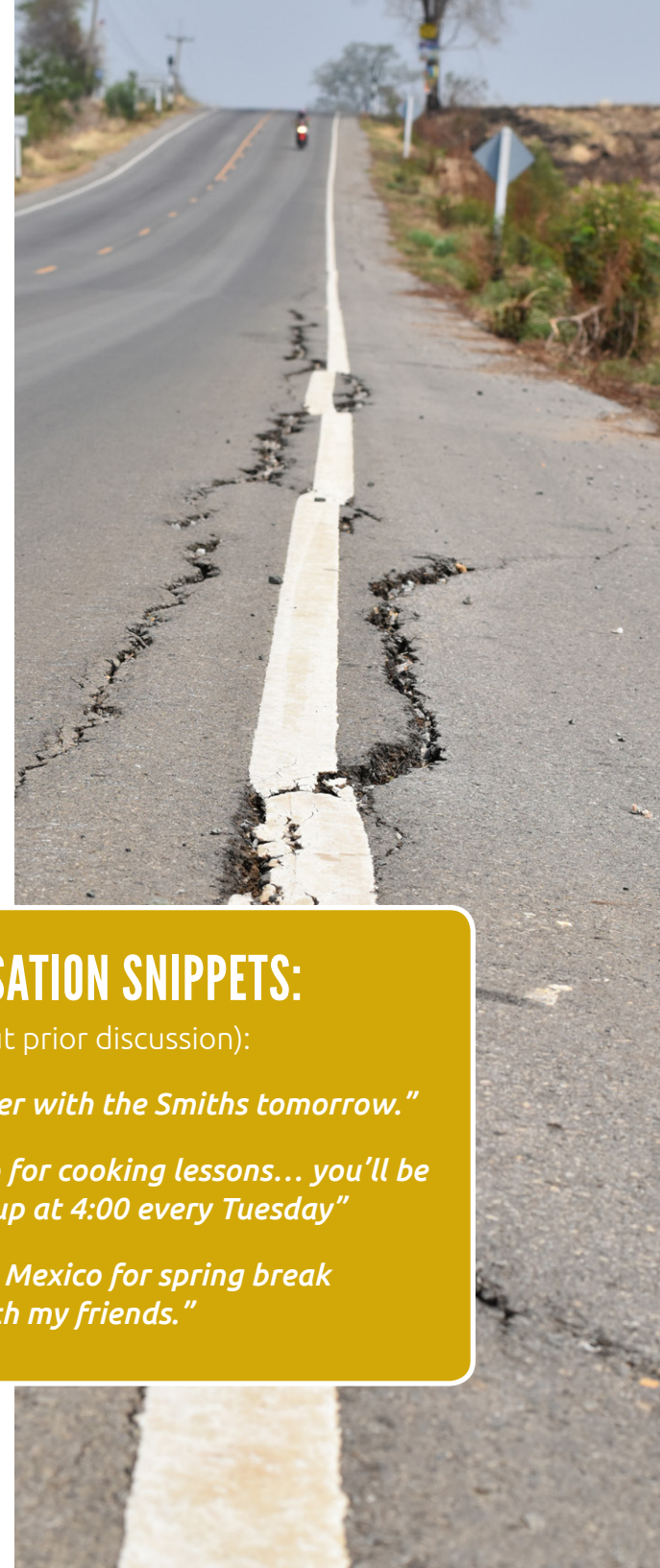
## CONVERSATION SNIPPETS:

(without prior discussion):

*“We’re having dinner with the Smiths tomorrow.”*

*“I signed the kids up for cooking lessons... you’ll be picking them up at 4:00 every Tuesday”*

*“I’m going to Mexico for spring break with my friends.”*



## A PERSONAL EXAMPLE: MY WAY

*Offered by a mentor, Kent Hotaling*

Kay and I moved from Seattle to Montreal in 1968 – a decision made in agreement with the two of us and several of our friends who knew us well. But, a couple years later when I was visiting Seattle, in a chance encounter a friend asked my advice. Each summer his church sent college students on deputations and they had four students who needed a place to go. My response was, “sure, send them to us in Montreal.” No consulting with Kay, just “my thing.”

A few days later I arrived back in Montreal to Kay, our three bedroom home with one bathroom, and three sons, and tried to explain that we had four college students joining us for the summer! Understandably, it was one of the most stressful times in our marriage. The grace of God covers a multitude of stupidities! Many good things came from this rash and independent decision but it was all Grace.



“When marrying, ask yourself this question: Do you believe that you will be able to converse well with this person into your old age? Everything else in marriage is transitory.”

~FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

# ↔ HORSE TRADING

This style is a bartering method in which you give, in order to get – it's the cliché couple seen in commercials. Each person wants to do their own thing but realizes that they should be fair about it and let the other person do their own thing as well. It's an honest effort to be fair about letting each person have equal opportunity to do what they want. Horse Trading is distinguished from My Way in that each person recognizes that the other person should be treated fairly.

This couple could live independent lives for some time in their own activity spheres, though it's probably not the best model for the long haul, or even for a happy relationship together in the short term. ***This couple will collect many experiences by themselves or with others, but may eventually grow distant from one another.***

The Horse Trading couple may not even consider working on or chasing a dream together. Being wrapped up in their personal interests may hide opportunities to use their individual strengths and grow something together.

Most couples will probably fall into this mode of operation every once in awhile. It is such a basic human tactic to compare ourselves and what we think we deserve, measuring how much time/money/attention we each get, and thinking it should be "more fair."

## CONVERSATION SNIPPETS:

*"Since you went out with friends last night, I get to go out tonight."*

*"It's your turn to change the diaper."*

*"Since I make more money than you, I should get to pick the paint color."*



## A PERSONAL EXAMPLE: HORSE TRADING

I was home, nine months pregnant with our first baby, and Rick was, at the moment, the sole bread-winner. Money was tight, and we were arguing about our spending as we drove home one afternoon. He had been buying lattes with his work mates every afternoon, and I pointed out this was something we couldn't afford – it also really bugged me that he was having fun going out for coffee with friends while I was pregnant at home.

The situation escalated when he replied, "It's my money." I responded by throwing an empty water bottle at him in the parking lot of our apartment complex. We weren't even pulling off horse-trading very well that day.



True Horse Trading probably would have included Rick suggesting I go out with friends in order to make his latte runs more "fair." Fortunately, we later resolved the issue and didn't put our finances in any additional peril.

**"To be fully seen by somebody,  
then, and be loved anyhow—  
this is a human offering that  
can border on miraculous."**

**~ELIZABETH GILBERT**



# MUTUAL SUPPORT

The Mutual Support style steps it up another level by agreeing that what the couple want in their marriage is two loosely connected lives. A Mutual Support marriage is more of a partitioned marriage, where each person first ensures they have their own life to live, and second, a shared life.

*They encourage each other to do what they want in such a way that there is little involvement in each other's sphere of activity.*

Mutual Support is distinguished from Horse Trading in that it involves agreeing on a style of life rather than only trying to be fair about trading. The element of supporting one another in their separate goals is an improvement as well.

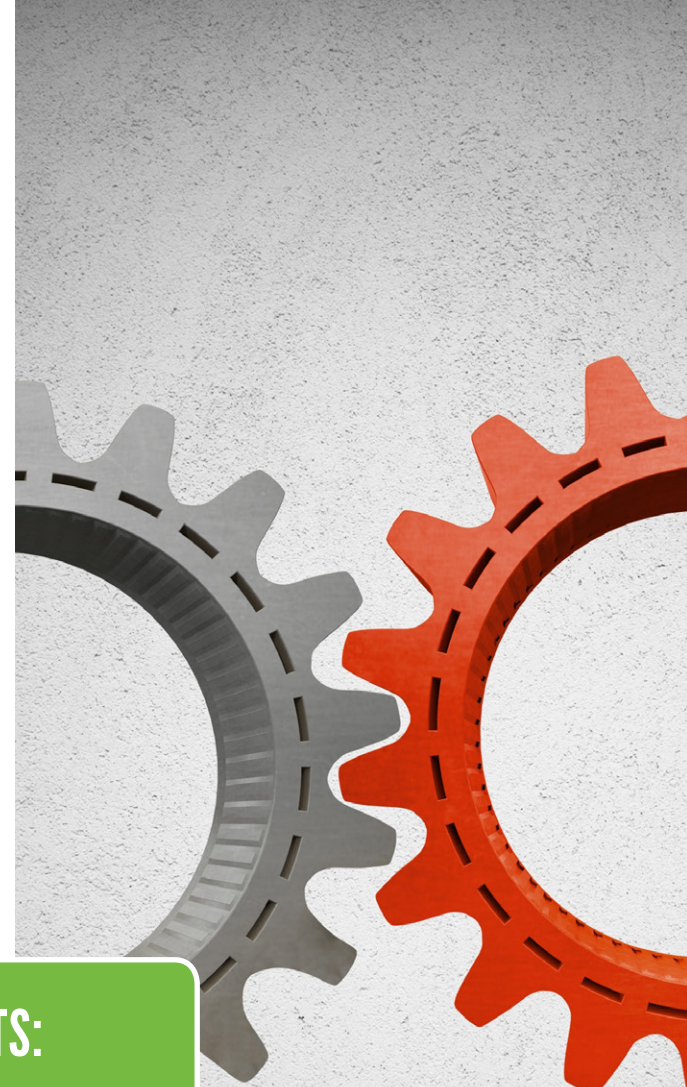
Many couples are quite happy with Mutual Support. They may care deeply for one another and probably share some aspects of their lives together. If they're running a business together, they might do very well, and even find working together at this shared goal moves their relationship even closer toward a Partnership.

## CONVERSATION SNIPPETS:

*"Let's work on our budget so we can each plan our trips with friends."*

*"I have no idea why he likes that hobby, but he seems to have a good time at it."*

*"Have a good time at the bowling tournament. I'll check in when I get to San Francisco!"*



## A PERSONAL EXAMPLE: MUTUAL SUPPORT

We have several areas in our relationship that operate in Mutual Support, though we decided years ago that our underlying motivation would be to do whatever we're doing in the spirit of Partnership (especially after reading the original 4-Styles paper the Hotalings shared with us). Still, there are times when we support one another in areas we're not particularly interested in ourselves. Rick loves long road biking journeys, and because I can see how deeply it feeds his soul, I support him in this. He will come home after a 3-hour ride looking like he's just won a million bucks!

I don't count how many rides he gets to go on, and try not to keep a scorecard, because I know if I get an opportunity to see a musical or other performance (which I love doing), he will be there to encourage me in that as well.



“If I get married, I want to be very married.”

~AUDREY HEPBURN



# PARTNERSHIP

*A Partnership marriage intentionally works toward equal and active participation in building a common dream together.* Two lives connected by many threads. There may be some shared activities and some mutually supportive activities – the difference between Mutual Support and Partnership lies in the motivation behind the actions.

Pursuing the common dream both partners have agreed to is the purpose behind all of their activities.

In our culture, the individual is king, so some might shy away from this style for fear of losing themselves or thinking this style is “co-dependent.” Though it may seem counter-intuitive, a healthy Partnership marriage actually creates an environment where both individuals become even more themselves. We’re all familiar with the idea that if two forces pull together they are stronger than the sum of their separate strengths. This seems to be the natural consequence of a healthy partnership: through encouraging the strengths of their partner and working together with their partner, becomes better, stronger, and more fully themselves.



*Partnership continued...*

***We believe the more time spent working together in life, the more connecting threads are created, and the closer a couple can potentially be.***

And, the skills they hone in order to work together in a business will naturally improve their marriage, giving them each moments to shine for one another and build mutual respect.

Partnership is the relationship style that requires the most discussion and agreement on priorities and what to do. Because we are individuals, we need to be able to navigate discussions, arguments, and debates so we can understand each other. It sounds like a lot of work, but the intimacy, friendship, and ability to work together without a lot of drama is a huge payoff.

On the flip side, the communication skills that marriage partners develop can also improve their other business relationships. If a couple can navigate who's going to make dinner when you're both exhausted, getting through a client meeting will be a piece of cake!

**“A great marriage is not when the ‘perfect couple’ comes together. It is when an imperfect couple learns to enjoy their differences.”**

**~DAVE MEURER**

## **CONVERSATION SNIPPETS:**

*“How do you feel about going to that party next week?”*

*“Should we work on our budget, or spend time with friends on Saturday?”*

*“What do you think about our daughter taking piano lessons?”*

## A PERSONAL EXAMPLE...

Probably the best thing we ever did to strengthen our partnership, without even knowing we were doing it, was to start a business together. We've always worked in the same room – mostly because we didn't have another extra room, but also because that just seemed like more fun. We didn't have much of a plan at the start. Just a couple technicians creating jobs for ourselves so we could both be home and parent our babies together. We've had to learn about real entrepreneurship along the way, but with that we've also learned first hand what each of us is best at, as well as what each of our greatest challenges are.

Probably our biggest challenge has been working on websites together. Rick does all the backend work, while I do the design work. There have

**“Love does not consist of gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction.”**

**~ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPERY**



been some seriously tense conversations (form vs. function!), but working our way through those situations has improved how we communicate. We've learned when to keep quiet and when to speak up. All of that has, of course, fed into our marriage and parenting as well.



## THE FOLLOWING ARE THREE SCENARIOS...

that might come up in a marriage, along with responses individuals might have from each of the four styles. Keep in mind, no one action or behavior automatically places a couple in any one style. Ultimately, it's the motivation behind their decisions that reveals their particular marriage style.

# SCENARIO #1

*Jessica and George are saving for a trip to Europe next summer. Jessica gets an invitation to join her old high school friends for a weekend at the coast. How will she respond?*

**MY WAY:** She agrees to go immediately without mentioning it to George, setting back their trip savings \$500.

**HORSE TRADING:** She tells George, who seems disappointed, about the invitation, though she still commits to going with friends. George, feeling like it's not fair she gets a trip with friends, promptly plans his own trip to settle the score. Their European plans are now set back \$1,000.

**MUTUAL SUPPORT:** Jessica discusses the opportunity with George and decides to go, but also offers to book a special trip for him as well. She may even work some extra overtime in order to make sure he gets to do something fun as well. Savings setback is at least \$500.

**PARTNERSHIP:** Jessica discusses the opportunity with George. They talk about the pros and cons of going. Maybe one of her friends needs to process some life, and could really use a shoulder right now. Or, maybe Jessica has had a tough patch at work lately and would really benefit from a getaway. If they both agree she should go, they both work extra hard to

“There is nothing nobler or more admirable than when two people who see eye to eye keep house as man and wife, confounding their enemies and delighting their friends.”

~HOMER

stay on track with their savings. George remembers that last year, he had a similar time with friends, and doesn't worry about whether it's "fair" or not. Or, they may realize after talking it through, that the trip with friends isn't really as important to her as saving the money for Europe. Whatever they decide, they work it out together.

## SCENARIO #2

*Sarah and Fred are newly married and wanting to start a business together. They're researching online business opportunities, including marketing (which Fred is good at) and photography (which Sarah is good at). How will they approach this difficult decision?*

**MY WAY:** As Fred is researching marketing platforms, Sarah has already purchased expensive camera and lighting equipment. Looks like their business will be photography, since there is no remaining budget to invest in marketing.

**HORSE TRADING:** Fred is researching marketing platforms, while Sarah is pricing photography equipment. They decide to split their budget in half, each of them starting their own business.

**MUTUAL SUPPORT:** As in Horse Trading, both Sarah and Fred do their research, and decide to pursue their own separate businesses. As they

**"The real act of marriage takes place in the heart, not in the ballroom or church or synagogue. It's a choice you make—not just on your wedding day, but over and over again—and that choice is reflected in the way you treat your husband or wife."**

**~BARBARA DE ANGELIS**

discuss how this works, they realize they can support each other in the process: Fred can help Sarah market her photography, and Sarah can supply Fred with images to promote his marketing.

**PARTNERSHIP:** After much discussion, Sarah and Fred realize their interests intersect, and that they could create a business that combines both of their talents. By creating a business together, they can stretch their budget: only one logo design, one accountant, one website, etc. Though much of the actual work is done separately, both of them will agree that overall, their actions will promote their joint venture.

## SCENARIO #3

*Chris has spent the last 15 years building a business, while Liz has home schooled their kids. Now that the kids are older and need Liz less, Chris is hoping she can help with the business. How will they move forward?*

**MY WAY:** Chris informs Liz she will help in the business now, and outlines her roles. Liz agrees because she knows that's what is expected, and she doesn't want to fight. She quietly resents Chris and his plans, and may even look for ways to undermine them.

“Lots of people want to ride with you in the limo, but what you want is someone who will take the bus with you when the limo breaks down.”

~OPRAH WINFREY

**HORSE TRADING:** Chris asks Liz for help and outlines the roles that need to be filled. Liz agrees to help, but only if she gets a bonus vacation with her friends.

**MUTUAL SUPPORT:** Chris asks Liz for help and they discuss what roles need to be filled in the business. Liz determines how she might be able to support Chris and the business, and agrees to help, as long as her role can create satisfying work for her as well.

**PARTNERSHIP:** Chris talks openly with Liz about how the business is at a point where more input is needed for growth, and asks Liz whether she thinks she might be able, interested and/or willing to help. They also talk about the ongoing needs of their kids, and how much time is needed there. Because there are some tasks they both know Liz would excel at, they work out a plan for Liz to help in the business part time, and for Chris to help the kids when needed. They also try to set goals for the business, and for each other, and celebrate when they are met. Because Chris and Liz are partnership-oriented, they will think through how including Liz in the work will impact both of their lives, what their expectations are, and how building the business together will impact other aspects of their life together.

“I love you not only for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you. I love you not only for what you have made of yourself, but for what you are making of me.”

~ROY CROFT

**IN CONCLUSION,** ask yourselves which of these styles you're spending most of your time in... are you both where you want to be? Would your current relationship style support, or even benefit from, a business partnership? What conversations, actions, tendencies, personality traits, and even boundaries need to be addressed in order to get there? Conversely, if you're with someone who won't talk about these things, you may have already answered that question.

*If your desire is to build a partnership marriage, and think working together might be your cup of tea, consider answering these...*

This questionnaire can help you ask the questions you didn't even know you should ask before taking the big step of creating and managing a business together.

[DOWNLOAD 20 CRITICAL QUESTIONS HERE](#)

# 20 CRITICAL QUESTIONS

Couples Should Ask  
Themselves to Ensure Their  
Business Success