

# The Biggest Relationship Game Changer

Mutually sharing influence.

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Source: Diva Plavalaguna/Pexels

Our [romantic relationships](#), especially for heterosexual couples, are going through a radical metamorphosis. There has been a shifting of influence in these unions over the last couple of generations and reactions from men to that shift in society broadly. There is good news ahead—but also likely continued relational conflict as we normalize the mutual sharing of influence in our love life.

The good news is that 50+ years of research from John and Julie Gottman suggest that when men [accept the influence](#) of their women partners, they experience greater relationship satisfaction and wellbeing.

The conflict that arises in relationships around sharing influence is well-documented. It is nearly cross-cultural and grounded in thousands of years of [gender](#) norms. Yet there is a way to address our collective influence problem.

You can start with working on what the Gottmans call the "fondness and admiration system." Basically, the system is functioning when you actually like your partner.

Fondness and admiration are fostered in the constellation of ways you show up for your relationship. It's in the consistent rituals of emotional connection that honor each other with [gratitude](#) and respect. Finally, it's in knowing and validating each other's pleasures, desires, wants, and needs. From that place of [friendship](#), you can share influence more easily, whether choosing a restaurant for date night or trying new things in the bedroom.

But if you haven't felt admired, respected, and validated in a while then you may not feel very fond of your partner. This kind of emotional disconnection is rampant, particularly in long-term relationships, and can lead to a passionless existence.

Recently, I spoke with Dr. Nazanin Moali from the Sexology Podcast about this issue and learned that up to 20 percent of marriages in the U.S. are [sexless](#) and that the rate is much higher in other parts of the world. Why? Enjoyable [sex](#) over the course of a lifetime requires fun—and no one is having fun with an ego-centric, defensive, or invalidating partner.

Our unions may feel fragile as gender norms shift, boundaries are being set, and many couples write their own version of a new way to love. Men have, as usual, a lot of power in how the next 100 years of romantic relationships play out in heterosexual couples. I recommend that they share easily and often as well as ask their partner this simple question: How can I love you better next week?

Maybe the answer has something to do with sharing influence.