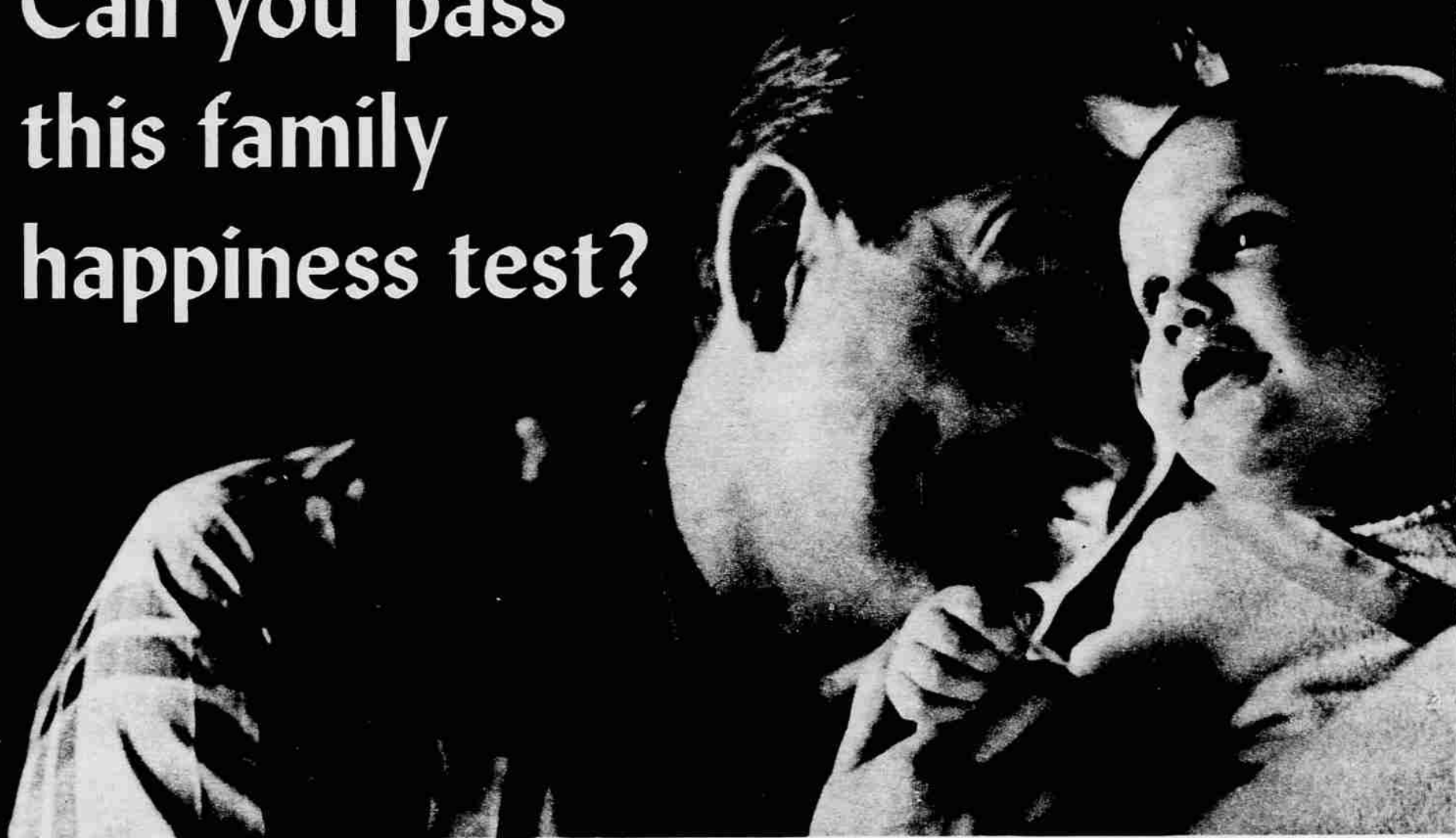


Can you pass this family happiness test?



by **Clark W. Blackburn**

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AT ONE OF OUR Midwest family agencies recently, an attractive young housewife unburdened her troubles to a caseworker.

Edna Lawson (that's not her real name) explained that she had been in the habit of taking late-morning coffee with a neighbor, Mrs. Pace, and revealing a distorted picture of the Lawsons' domestic affairs. One morning, Edna burst in hysterically and announced, "George hit me! He's a real brute!"

At the time, Mr. Pace—a night-shift worker—was at home and heard all about the Lawsons' "violent" squabble. Incensed, he vowed he would "whip" George that evening. By then, however, Mr. Pace had cooled off, and he calmly discussed the episode with George. It turned out that Edna had not been "beaten"; she had accidentally fallen against the kitchen table.

What George resented most, our caseworker learned later, was that his wife had taken her difficulties to a neighbor—especially to another man—instead of airing them with her own husband. Evidently, the lines of communication between the Lawsons had broken down. It took a great deal of adjustment before the couple was reconciled.

In contrast, I recall another floundering marriage in which the couple awoke in time to the fact that they were drifting apart. After discussing their problems dispassionately, they hit on a simple solution. Paul, the husband, had Wednesdays off on his milk route, but his wife spent that day visiting her aged mother in a nursing home. By merely switching Paul's free day to Tuesday, the couple could be together more often.

The underlying point is that Paul and his wife, the Lawsons, and millions of other couples can profit by a periodic self-appraisal of how their family life is getting along—whether or not discord is on the surface.

What about your own family? Is your marriage a good working partnership? Are relations with your children well-grounded? See for yourself by taking this quick family-life checkup. For each question, circle the answer that seems most appropriate to you and your family. Then compare your answers with those at the end selected by experts.

1. Do you feel closest to

- (a) your best friend?
- (b) your parents?
- (c) your husband (wife)?

2. When in trouble, do you discuss it first with

- (a) your parents?
- (b) your husband (wife)?
- (c) someone else?

3. Are disagreements started by you

- (a) rarely?
- (b) most of the time?
- (c) half the time?

4. After an argument is over, do you feel

- (a) it was good to get it out in the open?
- (b) that you lost?
- (c) that nothing was settled?

5. Have physical relations with your mate

- (a) grown distasteful?
- (b) become routine?
- (c) continued as an important part of your marriage?

6. When out with friends or in social gatherings, does your husband (wife) usually

- (a) leave you to your own devices?
- (b) make you feel ill-at-ease?
- (c) seem glad to have you along?

7. When you are affectionate to your children, does your husband (wife)

- (a) show genuine pleasure?
- (b) seem resentful?
- (c) try to attract their attention?

8. When buying things for the house, would you prefer to

- (a) do it yourself?
- (b) have husband (wife) along?
- (c) leave it to your spouse?