

Can you pass this family happiness test?



Experts say your marriage, like your health, should undergo periodic checkups; here's a test to determine how well your partnership is working out

19. How often does your family get together for trips, movies, recreational activities?
 - (a) frequently?
 - (b) occasionally?
 - (c) seldom?
20. In your community life, does your family
 - (a) avoid becoming involved with neighbors?
 - (b) constantly bicker with other families?
 - (c) take its share of responsibility by participating in civic affairs?

CORRECT ANSWERS: 1 (c) 2 (b) 3 (c) 4 (a) 5 (c) 6 (c) 7 (a) 8 (b) 9 (a) 10 (b) 11 (b or c) 12 (b) 13 (c) 14 (b) 15 (c) 16 (c) 17 (b) 18 (a) 19 (a) 20 (c)

How did you come out on the test? Remember, your family-life rating depends more on how acutely worried you are about a specific weakness in your relationships than on the total number of wrong answers. Thus, you may discover only two or three difficulties, perhaps affecting the children; but if your family harmony is seriously broken by them, you should seek outside help. Generally, however, a disagreement on one phase of home life affects another. Therefore, if you had less than five wrong answers and are not seriously concerned about any of them, you're on the right track; your family, about average, likes to live together. You probably have a basic potential for resolving your problems. If you had five to eight wrong, it's time to examine your relationships more closely to see how you're failing to measure up.

THE FAMILY that comes up with eight or more wrong answers—and has trouble in these areas of behavior—is seriously disorganized. Its members definitely need help. If there is a family-service agency in the community, seek its help. These agencies are equipped not only to handle serious problems after they've erupted but also to help in preventing minor irritations from becoming acute. There are other counseling resources such as ministers, psychologists, mental-health clinics, and welfare offices.

You should, of course, make every effort yourself to correct specific difficulties. You may, for example, realize now that you must go first to your spouse for decisions, not to parents or friends. If you and your mate fall into constant disagreements without settling them, you should realize that you're probably not facing the true problems. Your wrangles may be a substitute for reality. One couple quarreled continually about where to go on vacation but never mentioned that they had only \$180 to spend. The problem they wouldn't face was that their income wasn't large enough for the kind of vacation they wanted.

To appraise your family life realistically, bear in mind that all families have basic problems and areas of difference. Be prepared for them. In the early years of marriage, the couple has to agree on how to cope with in-laws, what part the husband should take in household tasks, the sharing of interests. By the fifth year, husband and wife should know their attitudes toward money, his career, their social standing, disciplining of children, and their short- and long-term future.

When they've been married about 15 years, the couple should decide on a joint attitude toward their adolescent child's dating, smoking, use of lipstick, teen-age rebellion.

(Continued on page 11)

by Clark W. Blackburn

General Director, Family Service Association of America with Theodore Irwin

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?

9. In doing the job of everyday living, is your husband (wife)
 - (a) good in some things while you excel in others?
 - (b) more capable than you?
 - (c) more helpless than you?
10. Since your marriage, have you found yourself to be
 - (a) less sure of yourself?
 - (b) more sure of yourself?
 - (c) no surer of yourself than before?
11. In solving daily problems, do you think best when
 - (a) nagged or under pressure?
 - (b) separated from others?
 - (c) usually in company of others?
12. When you are faced with family problems, do you
 - (a) slant them to make him (her) appear wrong?
 - (b) state the truth even if it is self-critical?
 - (c) jump to conclusions while overlooking the real facts?
13. After a decision is made, do you
 - (a) express resentment?
 - (b) try to upset the decision?
 - (c) stick by it and give credit where due?

14. Who is the leader in your family?
 - (a) wife or husband?
 - (b) wife and husband jointly?
 - (c) vote of entire family?
15. How often does your family give each member a chance to blow off steam?
 - (a) seldom?
 - (b) occasionally?
 - (c) frequently?
16. Are household chores
 - (a) never expected of your children?
 - (b) occasionally assigned to them?
 - (c) regularly assigned to children and adults on the basis of capacity and the need to accept responsibilities?
17. Is your attitude toward your child's schooling that
 - (a) grades are most important?
 - (b) you want him to learn all he can and find out what he can do best?
 - (c) teachers are the experts and the school's program is not your concern?
18. Is your religion presented to your family as
 - (a) a spiritual way of living?
 - (b) principally a form of periodic family get-together?
 - (c) a duty or obligation?