

# Quantify Your Wants and Needs

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One Wednesday evening, John and Mary had planned to go out to dinner together. It wasn't an anniversary, or even a special occasion, they just planned to take a break from their normal routine.

At the office that day, everything seemed to go wrong for John, and he became more and more frustrated. At first he looked forward to the relief of going home and taking Mary out. But when the time came, he had a splitting headache, felt quite exhausted and wanted nothing more than to stretch out on the living room couch and do nothing.

During the day, Mary learned that a special program was to be run on TV that evening, but somehow she hadn't heard about it. She was also feeling tired and would have been happy to stay at home and watch it.

She almost thought of calling John to suggest that they postpone their outing, but that seemed rather mean, so didn't do it.

As John pulled up his car in the driveway, he braced himself and took an aspirin. As he stepped over the threshold of the front door, he called Mary, in the most cheerful voice he could summon, and told her to get ready.

Mary heard the summon with a sinking heart, but pulled herself together and quickly changed. John was soon ready, and they set off together for the restaurant where they had made their reservation.

For a time, over dinner, they kept up the mood of the celebration. But ultimately it all tuckered out and they went home feeling frustrated and miserable. For the sake of the other, each had suppressed their real wishes.

WHAT SHOULD THEY HAVE DONE? If they had openly quantified their wants, they would have found out they both wanted to stay at home and they wouldn't have gone out. The following exercise will help you become comfortable quantifying your wants with your partner. It is suggested that you do this exercise when you are both rested and free of distractions.

### STEP ONE

Separately, make a short list of things you habitually do together, and the way in which you do them.

### STEP TWO

Get together with your two lists, and take turns presenting items until you have gone through both lists.

### STEP THREE

Under each item, signify how meaningful it is to you to engage in that particular activity. Don't try to use descriptive terms like 'a little' or 'somewhat' or a 'lot.' Instead, indicate the value you place on that activity on a scale from 0–10 (0 being not at all).

You probably won't have any zeros, and you might not have any tens. But the figures you assign around the middle of the scale will help you each to know how much both of you really value this or that activity, and how much you really need this or that help or support from the other.

On the basis of the clearer understanding which these figures supply, you may want to change some of your habitual activities.

If John and Mary had quantified their wants on that particular Wednesday evening, they probably would each have given the planned dinner a low score, and wouldn't have gone out at all. Both would have been a lot more satisfied.