

FIELD KIT FOR



BETTER RELATIONSHIPS



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The Field Kit for Better Relationships was created to help you take action on all the things Chip talks about in the series *Love, Sex, and Lasting Relationships*. You can access that series online at www.LivingontheEdge.org.

This field kit contains the following:



25 Creative Date Night Ideas

A fun list that may give you an idea for your next night out together.



Love vs. Infatuation: Quiz Guide

These 13 questions can help couples discern the difference between love and being “in love.”



Conflict Resolution Tool

Conflict is never easy, and no one likes it. This tool will help you think through conflicts so you can handle them successfully.



ABOUT LIVING ON THE EDGE

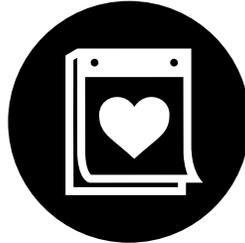
Living on the Edge exists to help Christians live like Christians.

It was established in 1995 as a radio ministry of pastor and author Chip Ingram. It has since grown into an international discipleship ministry with a clear vision: to be a catalytic movement of Christians living out their faith in ways that transform families, churches, and communities for the common good and the glory of God.

Living on the Edge creates Bible-based teachings and tools that challenge and equip spiritually hungry Christians to become mature disciples of Jesus.

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25 CREATIVE DATE NIGHT IDEAS

1. If you haven't been on a date for four months, just go. Anywhere. Do anything. That'll be creative enough.
Be adventurous: go for a hike or a bike ride, or try rock climbing.
2. Recreate your first date. Extra points if you can find the same clothes and still fit in them!
3. Go to a restaurant neither of you has been to before and order for the other person.
4. Read a book to each other, taking turns reading chapters.
5. Leave notes for future readers in your favorite books at a bookstore.
6. Have a picnic in a park you've never been to.
7. Take a workout class together.
8. Visit a museum to see something unexpected and new.
9. Take a mini road trip — find a new location an hour away.
10. Go camping; borrow the equipment you need.
11. Take a walk in the neighborhood where you grew up and share stories from your childhood.
12. Get up early and watch the sunrise.
13. Play a favorite board game; keep the competition friendly!
14. Do some gardening together, even if neither of you has a green thumb.
15. Go for a long walk to dinner out. You'll be hungry when you get there and burn off dessert during the walk home.

16. Take a community class: ceramics, cooking, painting, boxing, square dancing, street fighting.
17. Switch up the schedule and have a lunch hour date!
18. Try one of the classics: bowling, roller skating, or ice skating—or all three on the same date.
19. Read the *Five Love Languages* together.
20. Watch a TED Talk together and talk about it at dinner.
21. Volunteer together at church, a local rescue mission, a retirement home, or an animal shelter.
22. Go through the photos on your phones, print out your favorites, and make a scrapbook.
23. Rent a tandem bike — be sure to bring helmets.
24. Go ice blocking: get a block of ice, find a hill, and have fun!
25. Just for fun, make up a list of terrible ideas.



IS IT LOVE OR INFATUATION?

The following questions and statements can help you discover the difference between love and infatuation in your relationships. As a couple, answer these questions separately, and then talk about your answers together. It's hard to "boil down" relationships, but pick the answer that best describes your feelings and experience. Be honest! A relationship is only as strong as it is truthful.

1. TIME: What happens over time?

- Love grows over time, and while it may be tested, it also increases. (1 point)
- Infatuation may come suddenly, but it eventually fades. (2 points)

2. KNOWLEDGE: How much do you know about the other person?

- Love grows out of an appraisal of all the known characteristics of the other person. (1 point)
- Infatuation can arise from knowing only a few of someone's characteristics or even just one. (2 points)

3. SERVANTHOOD: Who is your priority?

- Love is selfless, centered on the other person. (1 point)
- Infatuation is selfish and self-centered. (2 points)

4. COMMITMENT: Are you exclusive?

- Love centers on only one person. (1 point)
- Infatuation may lead to being “in love” with more than one person. (2 points)

5. SECURITY: How much trust is present?

- Love leads to genuine feelings of security and confidence. (1 point)
- Infatuation reinforces a blind sense of security based upon wishful thinking that usually leads to jealousy. (2 points)

6. WORK: Does my relationship make me better?

- Love leads to mutual respect, with individual achievements supported and celebrated. (1 point)
- Infatuation seeks unhealthy and unattainable approval that may lead to apathy and misery. (2 points)

7. SOCIAL CONTEXT: As a couple, how do we relate to others?

- Love generally enjoys being around others. (1 point)
- Infatuation prefers isolation from others. (2 points)

8. PROBLEM SOLVING: How do we handle challenges and conflict?

- Love faces issues openly, with two people working together to overcome them. (1 point)
- Infatuation dismisses or denies issues and rejects input. (2 points)

9. FOCUS: What is our ultimate goal?

- Love dreams about a better future. (1 point)
- Infatuation dreams about a better feeling. (2 points)

10. DISTANCE: How do we feel when separated?

- Love persists under the strain of being apart and care remains strong. (1 point)
- Infatuation descends to impatience, frustration, and anger during separation. (2 points)

11. ATTRACTION: What role does physical attraction play in our relationship?

- Love is deeper than physical attraction and touch. (1 point)
- Infatuation puts the spotlight on physical attraction and touch. (2 points)

12. PUBLIC AFFECTION: How physically affectionate are you around others?

- Love demonstrates restraint. (1 point)
- Infatuation lacks restraint and modesty. (2 points)

13. STABILITY: How much stress can your relationship endure?

- Love endures pressure and grows through difficulty. (1 point)
- Infatuation crumbles under pressure, and fear leads to a lack of honest communication. (2 points)

Now, add up your points. A lower score may indicate love, and a higher score may mean infatuation. If your score is higher than expected, don't despair! Many relationships begin with infatuation and mature into love.

Based on your answers, what personal changes would you like to make?

What are some things you would like to discuss with your significant other?



CONFLICT RESOLUTION TOOL

Let's face it: no one likes conflict.

Conflict is inevitable, however. It's never a question of IF a conflict might occur; it's a question of WHEN. If a conflict is handled with maturity, it can lead to tremendous growth. We can grow closer to God and others, and we can even develop personal insight. Conflict creates unique opportunity.

There are two common responses to conflict: imploding and exploding. And neither is healthy. The "imploders" bottle up their feelings, while the "exploders" do the opposite — everyone knows how they feel.

Both responses to conflict offer short-term solutions. With the imploder, everything eventually comes out and conflicts become much more intense than they should. The exploder may recover quickly after an episode, but the effects linger for everyone else.

The following steps will help you successfully navigate your conflicts.

1. Identify the basic facts

*"In your anger do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent."
(Psalm 4:4, NIV)*

When conflict happens, begin by identifying the basic facts of the situation. This can lead to a more objective point of view. Feelings are important, but you'll examine those after looking at the surface details.

Ask yourself:

- **Who** was involved? Who saw what happened?
- **What** happened — what was done and said? Create an order of events.
- **When** and **where** did this take place? How did the time and place impact the conflict?

2. Discern your internal triggers

“But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults.” (Psalm 19:12, NIV)

Every conflict reveals something about your identity. Why were you bothered, offended, angered, or hurt? It’s difficult to examine our own motives. First, this isn’t something we normally do. Second, our motives are often mixed and can even be contradictory. What triggered your feelings? Ask yourself:

- What assumptions and expectations did I bring into this conflict?
- Did I bring a history or grudges from the past?
- Were there any external factors that made things worse?

3. Evaluate your “right” to be offended or hurt

“Where there is strife, there is pride, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.” (Proverbs 13:10, NIV)

“All a person’s ways seem pure to them, but motives are weighed by the LORD.” (Proverbs 16:2, NIV)

“Fools find no pleasure in understanding but delight in airing their own opinions.” (Proverbs 18:2, NIV)

“Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’” (Luke 23:34, NIV)

This step is tough, because you’ll need to do some emotional “heart surgery.” It calls for prayer, reflection, and time in God’s Word. This is where you take your thoughts and feelings and evaluate them against the standard of God’s wisdom.

Here is a reality – not everyone who is offended has a “right” to be hurt. Often we are selfish and prideful, and many conflicts exist only because of our immaturity. A child can get angry for getting only one scoop of ice cream, and adults can often act like children.

Some people do the opposite. When they experience a legitimate injustice, they are too quick to minimize their pain. This isn’t healthy either. Adopting a victim mentality or martyr complex

is actually an expression of a pride that says, “Look at how much I suffer.”

This step doesn't offer black or white answers. It's not like you either have the right to be hurt or you don't. It's an evaluation in which you identify what you need to “own” and what you need to forgive. Here is the golden opportunity in conflict: learning to give up selfishness and pride while forgiving others as Jesus does.

4. Identify the “kind” of conflict

There are essentially three kinds of conflict: (1) personal offense, (2) disagreement, and (3) miscommunication.

Personal offense: All conflicts carry a degree of emotion — this is what makes them so painful — but they are especially charged when someone has been personally wounded. When a person feels attacked or devalued, the resolution of the conflict is more about humility and apology than words and ideas. “Right” and “wrong” matter very little when someone is hurt.

Miscommunication: This kind of conflict is difficult to discern without reflection and conversation. Often, two people enter a conflict believing they disagree, only to realize after talking it out that they simply had a miscommunication. Miscommunications don't make the conflict any less real, but they can be easier to resolve.

Warning: People who avoid conflict and lack integrity tend to play off strong disagreements as miscommunication to deflate the tension. This is a short-term solution that often leads to devastating effects in the long term.

Disagreement: Not everyone has the same point of view. Most of the time, this is a good thing because we need the wisdom that comes from a different perspective. Disagreements are about individual differences, and when this kind of conflict happens, you have essentially three options: (1) change your thinking, (2) hope the other person changes their thinking, or (3) compromise and find some middle ground.

Perhaps the word “kind” in this section's title isn't quite right, since conflicts don't fit into neat little boxes. It's probably more accurate to say “flavors” of conflict; while there is often a dominant flavor, the other flavors are typically mixed in, too.

5. Decide whether you ought to say something

“Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you yourself will be just like him. Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes.” (Proverbs 26:4-5, NIV)

On the surface, it seems like this scripture offers contradictory advice. Should you “answer” the fool or not?

After significant reflection about your conflict, you have to determine if you are going to respond. This scripture gives us two guidelines to keep in mind:

1. We should speak up if we can keep from being foolish ourselves, and...
2. We should seek to help the other person gain wisdom. If we can't fulfill these two criteria, we shouldn't say anything.

6. Determine what you need to say

"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." (Proverbs 15:1, NIV)

"The heart of the righteous weighs its answers, but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil." (Proverbs 15:28, NIV)

A brother wronged is more unyielding than a fortified city; disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel." (Proverbs 18:19, NIV)

Conflicts are serious, so you can't just wing it. Below are a few things to keep in mind.

First, determine your goal. What outcome do you hope to achieve? There are a thousand selfish goals in conflict; instead, work toward what God wants. Working through step 4 (identifying the "flavor" of conflict) should help shape your goals for the conversation.

Second, write out your thoughts, even if you jot down just a few bullet points. Keep it brief, remembering Ecclesiastes 6:11: "The more the words, the less the meaning, and how does that profit anyone?"

Finally, engage your imagination and try to predict how the other person will respond. This will allow you to make changes to what you need to say before you say it and be prepared for possible responses.

7. Talk to someone who is spiritually mature

"The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice." (Proverbs 12:15, NIV)

If the conflict is serious enough, you need to share what you are thinking and feeling with someone who is spiritually mature. You need the prayer and the wisdom that comes from another perspective. Don't gossip — it's easy to do when you're hurt! Instead, share your heart and seek guidance.

8. Prepare your heart

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean." (Matthew 23:25-26, NIV)

You need to position your heart to achieve the best possible outcome. You don't want to be foolish. Instead you need to be:

- Humble enough to learn and/or apologize.
- Gentle enough to “nudge” rather than “shove.”
- Self-controlled enough to not get angry.
- Pure enough to speak plainly without innuendo and sarcasm.

If you can't be humble, gentle, self-controlled, and pure, you probably aren't ready to have a difficult conversation.

9. Initiate the conversation

“If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over.” (Matthew 18:15, NIV)

“11 When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. [...] 14 When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all...” (Galatians 2:11; 14, NIV)

“Let your gentleness be evident to all.” (Philippians 4:5, NIV)

Pick the best possible time and place to create the conditions for the best possible conversation, remembering that what is best for you may not be best for the other person. Patience is important! The conversation probably won't be easy, so it won't happen on its own. You need to initiate it.

Typically, a face-to-face conversation is best, but this isn't always possible. In this day and age, the following warning is needed: Don't handle your conflict via text messages!

In some situations, it may be best to begin with a letter or email and follow up with a conversation.

10. Reflect on what you said and saw

“Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?” (2 Corinthians 13:5, NIV)

“Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord.” (Lamentations 3:40, NIV)

“So I turned my mind to understand, to investigate and to search out wisdom and the scheme of things...” (Ecclesiastes, 7:25, NIV)

You've finished the hard part, but you're not done yet! Make a little time to reflect on how the conversation went. Did you say what was needed? Did you handle the conversation with maturity? What did you learn from the experience?

11. Consider a written follow-up

This may not be a good idea for every situation, but if it would be helpful, send a note in the mail or an email. Don't use it as an opportunity to drive home your points or further air your grievances. Instead, you might follow up with:

- What you learned
- An apology
- Thankfulness for taking the time to talk
- Your forgiveness
- A summary of the decisions

12. Keep forgiving

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times." (Matthew 18:21-22, NIV)

Forgiving someone is never a one-time event. It would be so much easier if it were! The deeper the wound, the longer and more often you will need to forgive. Ultimately no matter what injustices we face, as believers we are called to follow the example set by Jesus and forgive.



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