

**PURPOSE**

Understand differences in paying attention to the contribution of each partner

**MATERIALS**

Worksheets

**TIME**

1 hour

During any enduring relationship there will be times when one person will give up something that is important to them so that the other can have or do something even more important, or so that together they can achieve something they both want.

There is an element of giving and taking in many of the agreements that couples make. Anything that involves people working together relies on a certain amount of give and take AND take and give.

Businesses, sporting teams, theatre companies and many other groups rely heavily on everyone placing their self interest to one side and concentrating on what can be achieved together. There are pay offs for individuals, but they have to give first.

Couples are no different. Although their goals may not be as clear as making a profit, winning the Grand Final or putting on a successful musical, couples who pool their resourcefulness and work together are likely to go further towards their goals than those who pull against each other.

There are two common ways of thinking that can make this process a challenge.

There is not a consensus yet, but one scheme that seems to make sense to a lot of people and that has a good deal of support in the scientific community is the Big Five theory. It integrates a lot of other research.

### Differences in the give and take balance.

Most people want to be in a relationship that feels fair, where burdens are shared more or less equally and support and opportunities are available to both.

People monitor what they are giving and what they get in return

over time. This is not mercenary or manipulative; it is about feeling that the relationship is balanced and supporting both of the partners. In common with many other aspects of relationships there are differences in the way people monitor their relationship balance. People learn about the give and take balance in relationships as they grow up. Their personality preferences also play a part.

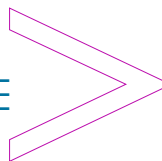
Different acts of giving and taking are understood to be more or less important. For instance, in one family a parent's time with children might be counted as giving (when a person leaves an interesting challenging job to have children and care for them), in another, as taking (when the person caring for the children is understood to be "having time off work").

It can be a big surprise when it becomes clear that something one partner hardly noticed is being counted, and has a big score on the give and take balance for the other.

It is possible to have negative scores on the give and take balance. This commonly occurs when a person expects that their partner will do or say something supportive and they don't. If you find yourself feeling like this, one possibility is to ask for your partner to do or say what you'd prefer. Maybe this seems contrived, but at least your partner knows what it is you want – no mind reading needed!



## ACTIVITY ONE



## PUTTING IN TABLE

*Individually, in the first column list the last three things that you have done when you made a decision to do something for the other person that meant you had to "put in".*

In the final column, record whether you think it was properly noticed and appreciated by your partner.

## WHAT YOU DID

SCORE YOU THOUGHT IT WAS WORTH 1-10

## WAS IT NOTICED & APPRECIATED?

SCORE IT SEEMED TO GET 1-10


## SHARE WITH YOUR PARTNER...

What did you find out?  
How you both feel about what happened?

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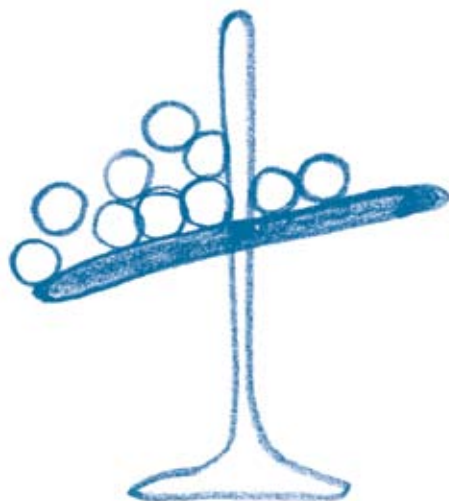
## THE 80/20 EFFECT

You'd hope that over time the contributions of each person would work out to be 50/50.

It often doesn't feel like that. Each person is very aware of the effort they put into each task. It is much harder to be aware of their partner's efforts.

It can easily feel like 80/20.

It is as well to remember this when thinking about the contributions each person makes to your relationship and all of the activities that need to be completed to maintain ordinary life.





## COMPARE YOUR LISTS...

It is quite common for people to be unaware of many of the tasks that their partner does. It is also common for a person not doing a particular task to discount its difficulties and pressures.

The common example of this is when the person looking after the children thinks their partner's life in the workforce is a lot easier than what they are experiencing at home and the partner that is working thinking that looking after children is a breeze compared to working.

It is easy to see how resentment can build up. Paying attention to your partner's efforts and giving them thanks and appreciation for their efforts helps to make sure that doesn't happen.

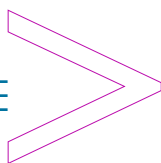
While it may be that there is an exchange of effort between partners, it is always easier to keep going when you feel appreciated.

## APPRECIATIVE STATEMENTS

Thanks for (insert task). It makes a big difference. I didn't realise that you (insert task). Thanks. We get a lot done between us, thanks for the things you do.

!! thank you! !!

## ACTIVITY THREE



## APPRECIATION

*Try to notice your partner doing something you have never thanked them for before. Thank them.*

Make time and a space in the busyness to ask your partner about their day and really listen. Try to really find out what every day is like for them.