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FAMILY

Marriage as Science

The revelations of Dr. Gottman's "Love Lab"

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Why is marriage so tough at times? Why do some lifelong relationships click, while others just tick away like a time bomb? And how can you prevent a marriage from going bad--or rescue one that already has? Why do half of all American marriages end in divorce within just seven years? After years of scientific research, John M. Gottman unveils his best answers in *The Seven Principles for Making a Marriage Work* (Crown Publishers, Inc., 201 East 50th Street, New York, New York, 10022 USA; US\$12.95). Until now there have been a lot of opinions, but not really much rigorous scientific data about why some marriages succeed and others flop.

Rather than sit and listen to couples explain their problems to him, Dr. Gottman decided to study marriages as they actually happened. He, his wife and colleagues set up the "Love Lab," a studio apartment in the laboratory of the University of

Washington, equipped with kitchen, foldout sofa, TV, phone and a beautiful window view of Mont Lake--along with hidden cameras, a one-way mirror and sensors to track body signs. Enlisting couples for a 24-hour stay in this semi-natural environment gave Dr. Gottman unique first-hand experience on how couples privately interact and relate. He recorded and studied every facial expression, every word in a conversation, noting whether it was negative, positive or just chit chat. This wasn't a Master and Johnson sexual study, however, and couples were given privacy as due. The focus was on the personal interaction. For example, when test subjects Oliver and Dhara start to talk about sharing housework, Gottman observed that Dhara immediately became negative. In spite of Oliver's jokes to lighten the situation, she became sarcastic--a very bad sign, Gottman has observed over the years. He's gotten so good at spotting the strengths and weaknesses of a marriage that he can predict with 91 percent accuracy whether the marriage will end in divorce or not, often after just a few minutes observation in the Love Lab.

Gottman has summarized his years of research

into seven principles (below) which, if followed, can make a marriage happy and successful. He teaches "emotional intelligence" through exercises, activities and questionnaires that help guide you in your everyday interactions with your spouse in a way that bonds your friendship and provides a foundation to handle conflicts. He divides marital problems between "solvable" and "unsolvable," recommending ways to resolve the former and mutually adapt to the latter. Altogether this is serious and useful advice for any marriage