



5 PRINCIPLES *Of A Winning Relationship*

Dr. Jackie

BLACK

MARRIAGE EXPERT & COUPLE COACH

DRJACKIEBLACK.COM



Hello! I'm Dr. Jackie.

If you're here, it's probably not because something's broken.
It's because something important feels like it's missing.
You still love each other.
You're still committed.
But the closeness? The yumminess?
It's not what it used to be.

And while you might be telling yourself this is just what happens after so many years of marriage — I'm here to tell you that's not accurate.

What you're experiencing isn't the end of anything.
It's a sign that you're ready for a different kind of intimacy — one that grows with you, not in spite of you.

For almost 40 years, I've supported over 1,000 couples across 8 countries as a relationship expert, marriage educator, and board-certified coach. The couples I work with don't need saving. They need a way back to each other that actually fits the life they're living, now.

That's exactly what this guide is designed to help you do.
Not with big dramatic changes — but with small, honest shifts that bring your connection back into focus.

If something in Holly's and Les's story feels familiar, you're not alone.
This isn't about starting over.
It's about showing up differently — together.
Let this be your first step back to a relationship that feels like being home in the best possible way.

I'm so glad you're here.

MEET HOLLY AND LES

Holly and Les have been married for 8 years.

He's a serial entrepreneur who loves what he does — and can get lost for hours in the joy of his work.

She's an artist who doesn't just want time together — she wants to feel chosen, understood, and emotionally close.

Their love runs deep.

But lately, the pauses feel heavier than the connection.

There's no shouting. No dramatic breakdowns.

Just a growing sense of emotional distance that neither of them really knows how to name.

They still love each other.

They're still committed.

But something subtle has shifted.

It's the way she feels him drifting, even when he's sitting next to her.

It's the way he senses her disappointment — but isn't sure how to reach her without getting it wrong.

They're doing the things.

But not feeling the us.

And when we began working together, it wasn't about solving a single fight or fixing a nagging problem.

It was about finding their way back into connection —

The kind that feels safe.

Alive.

And mutual.

What changed everything wasn't a grand gesture. It was a gentle return to what got lost for both of them.

Here are the 5 Principles that helped Holly and Les reconnect — without needing to start over or become new people.

Just showing up. Together.

More honestly than before.

Dr. Jackie
BLACK

PRINCIPLE NUMBER ONE:

1 Identify the Problem

Holly was feeling a discomfort she couldn't quite name.

Les loved his work, felt fulfilled by what he was creating, and didn't realize anything was off. He wasn't avoiding Holly — he was just unaware she'd started to feel alone.

No one was being difficult or shutting down.

Holly missed Les.

Les believed he was balancing it all well — doing work that fulfilled him and showing up with Holly in loving ways he thought counted.

The problem was that Holly missed Les, and Les didn't know that.

• For Your Personal Reflection:

What is not working for you?
What do you need or want, instead?

• For Your Couple Reflection: Identify The Problem

Share with your partner what's not working and what you need or want, instead. Keep sharing until both of you have a clear understanding of what the problem is, for whom it's a problem and why it's a problem.

Up next: Now that you know what the problem is,
what do you want to be different?

PRINCIPLE NUMBER TWO:

2 What Do You Want to Be Different?

Once Holly and Les could name what wasn't working, they were on their way to solving the problem and discovering what they wanted to be different.

Holly figured out that she wanted them to have coffee together in the morning, meet for a quick lunch on Tuesdays or Wednesdays every week, and order dinner in once a week so they could just hang out and eat delicious food, together.

Holly didn't want constant closeness.

She just wanted to feel chosen — even in the middle of a busy week.

Les loved that Holly enjoyed his company and loved knowing what actions he could take that would make Holly feel loved, connected and chosen.

They went from what wasn't working to what they wanted to feel more of. And from that clarity, they made a plan. They didn't overhaul their lives.

No pressure, no screens
No drama.
Just deliberate intention.

💡 For Your Personal Reflection:

What would you like to feel more of in your relationship?
What would make you feel more connected, cared for and cherished?

💡 For Your Couple Reflection: Name What You Want

Share with each other one thing you'd like to feel more of — and how you could make that happen.
Focus on feeling, not fixing. Be specific. Be curious.

Up next: If you know what you want— how do you have to change to contribute to that happening?

PRINCIPLE NUMBER THREE:

3

How do you have to change to contribute to the yumminess that you want to experience?

I know you would love to have everything fixed without having to make any changes.

Unfortunately, you have to do something or stop doing something if anything is going to change for you and your partner.

Think of this as your mirror moment.

It's not about blame — it's about you taking responsibility for your part.

Les believed he was showing up as an attentive and loving partner. His actions matched his intentions. He had no idea that he was missing anything.

The story Holly was telling herself was that Les's work was more important than she was. That he enjoyed working more than he enjoyed being with her.

They were each holding different stories — and neither of them realized how much that was shaping the feel of their connection.

They were both welcoming of more warmth, more ease, more us.

To get there, they had to both make changes — not become new people, but take action to co-create the yumminess they both wanted to experience.

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PRINCIPLE NUMBER THREE:

3

How do you have to change to contribute to the yumminess that you want to experience?

Les began reaching out in small ways — a midday check-in, a warm hand on her back while making dinner, a little kiss for no reason.

Holly started speaking up earlier — no longer making Les the villain, and being clear about what she needed and wanted, and having the courage to ask.

💡 For Your Personal Reflection:

If connection has been feeling a bit out of reach lately, how might your current patterns be playing a role?
What's one gentle change you'd be open to making this week?

💡 For Your Couple Reflection: Explore Possible Actions

What's one action you could both take that would enable you to be more approachable and to approach each other?

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“It's true — it feels like we're on our honeymoon every day.”

We are both stronger individually and now we're prepared as a couple for whatever comes our way. I wasn't sure it was possible, but it's true — it feels like we're on our honeymoon everyday. We thank you, Dr. Jackie.

~ Brad and Joanne M.

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Up next: If you're both making changes — what do you need from each other to make it sustainable?

PRINCIPLE NUMBER FOUR:

4

What Do You Need From Your Partner?

This is where your relationship becomes the resource — not the roadblock.

This step is critical. **You are not the problem and the solution.**

It's legitimate to need your partner to be involved in co-creating a mutually acceptable solution to the problem.

Les realized that regular emotional check-ins that weren't tied to solving problems would help him keep their connection top of mind, even when life was full.

Holly realized that she didn't need constant attention, she just needed regular moments of togetherness that she could count on — simple things like unrushed dinners, quiet walks, or drives with nowhere to be.

Not to solve anything.

Just to feel close.

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PRINCIPLE NUMBER FOUR:

4

What Do You Need From Your Partner?

Holly's needs and Les's needs were legitimate.

They'd just never said them out loud.

Once they did — their connection deepened.

They were learning how to be there for themselves and each other in more powerful ways.

💡 For Your Personal Reflection:

What action from your partner would make you feel safer, softer and more connected?

Have you said that out loud — or are you just hoping they'll guess?

💡 For Your Couple Reflection: Share What You Need

Take turns and ask each other this question:

"What do you need from me to feel safer, softer and more connected?"

Take turns and share what you need.

"I would feel closer to you if..."

Keep it honest. Keep it simple. Keep it kind.

Up next: You've clarified what's needed — now what's one small step forward that you can take together?

PRINCIPLE NUMBER FIVE:

5 What's Your Next Step?

This is where intention becomes action.

Holly and Les set their intention to feel like a team again and here is the action they took:

Every Sunday, they sit down with coffee and move through questions like these, together:

- What's coming up for you next week that I could support or cheer you on through?
- Is there anything weighing on you that we could make feel a little lighter, together?
- What's one thing we want to set aside time for — just the two of us?

No pressure.

No performance.

Just presence.

Not because they're solving anything —
but because they're choosing to create more of what feels yummy, together.

💡 For Your Personal Reflection:

What's one thing you can choose to do or say this week
that deepens the 'us' you're creating?

💡 For Your Couple Reflection: Plan Forward Together

Decide on one small action you can take together this week.
Not to fix the relationship — but to feed it.

**Now, it's your turn. Let these 5 Principles guide you back into connection
— one intentional action at a time.**

REFLECTION WRAP-UP

To ensure that you and your partner get the best results from your effort, I recommend you each use your own worksheet to record your responses to each of the prompts.

Principle Number 1: Identify the problem. What is not working for you?
What do you need or want, instead?

Principle Number 2: What do you want to be different? What would you like to feel more of in your relationship? What would make you feel more connected, cared for and cherished?

Principle Number 3: How do you have to change to contribute to the yumminess that you want to experience? If connection feels out of reach, how might your patterns be part of that – and what's one small shift you'll try this week?

Principle Number 4: What do you need from your partner to co-create the connection you dream about? What action from your partner would make you feel safer, softer and more connected?

Principle Number 5: What's your next step? What's one thing you can choose to do or say this week that might deepen the 'us' you're creating?

Cheers to your joy with your partner!

ARE YOU READY?

You're not Holly and Les. But maybe something in their story feels familiar.

Here's your invitation:

Consider one place in your relationship where connection feels a little out of reach — the kind that's easy to overlook, but hard to carry — and walk it through these 5 Principles.

1. What's the problem — what's been quietly showing up between you, and how does it feel on both sides?
2. What would you love to feel more of — together?
3. What's one way you might be making closeness harder — even if unintentionally?
4. What do you need right now — and are you willing to share it out loud?
5. What's one small action you can take together this week to feel more like a team?

And if you're wondering...

*Yes — Holly and Les are real people.
And the shifts they made?

Those are real too.

So are the thousands of couples who've walked this path before you.
You don't have to do it alone.
But you do have to begin.

*Holly and Les graciously gave permission to share their story.

MARRIAGE COACHING WORKS

If this resonates and you feel the quiet knowing that it may be time to stop postponing what's calling you forward, I want to invite you into a conversation with me.

Each month, I open a limited number of private conversations where we take a thoughtful look at what's working, what feels hard, and what you wish were different.

These conversations are by application, and I personally review each one. If it feels like the right moment for you and your partner, I would love to meet you.

If you would like one...

[Your Application Is Here!](#)

I don't work with every couple. I work with the ones who are still all in — and want a relationship that feels rich, not just functional.

My private programs are for couples who don't need fixing — just the right way forward. If you're ready, so am I. Let's talk.



[Main Website](#)