

# Enduring Love? Couple Relationships in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

## Methods information and instructions for participants

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### Emotion map

Emotion maps aim to find out about your everyday experiences as these take place around your home. In this sense, they ask you to think about and 'locate' what you do and where in terms of your couple relationship and also your wider relationships with other people.

To begin, the researcher will accompany you around your house and draw up a floor plan. This forms the basis of your emotion map. It will be transferred to a Word document and will be returned to you along with a set of coloured stickers. These stickers will include the following emoticons:



This method is completed individually by participants over the course of a one week period. Different colours should be used for the different people you wish to represent, including you, your partner, children (if any), family, friends, pets, and so on.

You can complete it over the course of the day as and when you have time or at the end of the day, thinking back to what has happened and where. The emoticons are used to indicate some of the kinds of emotions that you may have experienced over this week.

Once this method is completed you should send or give your emotion map to the researcher and they will make a copy. This will be used as the basis of the first interview, where you will be asked to talk through your week, with reference to the emotion map, and the experiences, interactions and feelings that you represented using the selected emoticons.

### Diaries

Diaries aim to find out about your everyday routines, for example what you did and when. You should complete your diary over the same one week period as your emotion map, at a time and in a place that suits you. You can use it to reflect upon any aspect of your relationship during the week, writing as little or as much as you like.

The diary can also become a kind of scrapbook. As such, you could include mementos (if any) of any time you spend together. These could take the form of TV guide clippings or receipts for the cinema, for example, or maybe the label from a bottle of wine or beer, a menu from a meal out or take away, or the packaging from a shared meal at home. You can include pictures that you have taken if you'd like to.

The diary format is flexible. You can use the notebook given to you by the researcher, a Word document on a computer, or an Outlook calendar on your phone. Use whatever works for you. Photos can be attached to an electronic file and sent to

us. We are happy to print these out for you. You can then simply describe where they fit in your diary and leave a space for them.

In your written diary, we would like you to include your experiences of on some or all of the following areas:

- Any time that you spend together with your partner, including the kinds of activities you did and the times of day and duration of these activities
- Any time that you spend apart from your partner, including the kinds of activities you did and the times of day and duration of these activities
- Any things, both inside and outside the home (such as your job, TV programmes etc) that have made you think about and/or have affected your relationship in some way
- Any conversations or contact with people (such as your family, friends, children etc) who have made you think about and/or have affected your relationship in some way
- Anything that you or your partner have done (gestures, actions, words) for each other
- Anything that you have done for yourself
- One good moment in each day
- One challenging moment in each day

Once you have completed your diary please send or give it back to the researcher in whatever format you have chosen. We will make a copy and, along with the emotion map, this will be used as the basis of the first interview, when you will be asked to talk through your week with reference to the diary and the experiences and interactions that you included.

### **Interview 1: Individual - you**

### **Interview 2: Individual – your partner**

Your individual interview is in two halves and will be completed with you on your own.

In the first half of the interview you will be invited to talk about experiences and different relationships across your life.

During the second half of this interview you and the researcher will talk through the events and experiences that you have described in your diary and depicted on your emotion map. You will can tell us about the detail of these events, what they mean to you and fill in any gaps that you have identified, that is to say anything that you forgot to include at the time or perhaps fleshing out an experience that you may only briefly described in your diary for example.

### **Interview 3: Couple**

In the second interview we will talk to you and your partner together. This will ordinarily be completed on a separate day to your individual interview. You will be shown a series of six images that comprise pictures on different aspects of long-term couple relationships. You will then be asked to respond to these images and to reflect on how these connect with or diverge from your personal experience and/or opinions on the meanings of enduring long-term relationships.