



Meeting Your Match

Cracking the code to successful relationships

Dr. Jackie's 15-Step Process for Crafting Elegant Agreements

There are three essential keys to crafting elegant agreements:

1. Know who you are and what you need, want, value and believe.
2. Become willing and able to honor who you are and ask for what you want.
3. Find your courage and accurately articulate all this knowledge and the values to another person.

What is the **issue** you want to craft an elegant agreement around?

What do you **need** relative to this issue?

What do you **want** to achieve/accomplish?

What **value** are you trying to support or preserve?

What is your **belief** around this issue that is driving this agreement?

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Jackie Black, Ph.D., Relationship Expert, Author and Coach

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W: <http://www.IdealMatchCoachingClub.com> • E: DrJackie@IdealMatchCoachingClub.com • T: 1.866.419.5928 / +1.866.419.5928

Now craft your Elegant Agreement:

- 1. Create and clearly articulate your joint vision with as much rich detail as possible. Be sure that both of you participate with eagerness and passion.

- 2. Be sure that both of you are creating the agreement with intention and with a belief that you are well served making and honoring the agreement.

- 3. Make a list of each person's strengths, gifts, skills and talents that are available to be drawn on by each of you.

- 4. Identify, with as much detail as possible, all the aspects of what it is you are coming to an agreement about. A joint plan works best when you are both working toward the same joint vision.

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5. Be certain that each of you understands and acknowledges the actions (behaviors), attitudes and responsibilities that are associated with the agreement for you and your partner.

6. Decide together if the actions and attitudes are sufficient to result in the desired outcome(s). If they are not, identify what additional actions and attitudes must be included and by whom.

7. All agreements must have specific time deadlines for each part of the agreement to be completed or finalized. These are "by whens" — by when will you do this, and by when will you do that? In addition, the time period the agreement will be in force must be specified.

8. Do both the agreement as a whole and all the parts of the agreement forward the joint vision?

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9. Clearly identify the evidence or positive outcome(s) that you expect to result for each person from making and honoring the agreement.

10. Does the agreement as a whole and do all the parts of the agreement truly satisfy each person and result in each person being whole? Being whole refers to being sure that neither person experiences a loss or losses as a result of pledging time, attention and commitment to the agreement.

11. Bring all your concerns and fears to this discussion. This can often minimize the disagreements that may occur during the process of crafting the agreement. This discussion will deepen your commitment to the agreement and to your partner or reveal a problem that might already be brewing in the relationship.

12. No matter how optimistic and clear you both are when you craft an agreement, one or both of you will likely come back to the table and ask for the agreement to be renegotiated or changed in some way at some time. This is definitely not a personal failure or a failure of the process. This is an expected, anticipated part of crafting and honoring agreements.

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13. It is critical to include a mechanism that will take into consideration the many changes that normally and naturally occur over time in people's relationships. Being realistic about this at the beginning enables the relationship to evolve and prosper. It is imperative to provide each person with a way to accommodate change — an exit strategy you can both follow with dignity. Anyone who feels imprisoned in an agreement, commitment or relationship will not be his or her best self or offer all possible personal contributions to forward the joint vision.

14. It is inevitable for conflicts and disagreements to arise and perhaps one of you will not honor the agreement. Establish an attitude of good will and good intention and a plan to repair hurt feelings and disappointments.

15. Both people must be responsible to ensure that the agreement is honored. Unless and until you are satisfied, do not move into action. Do not agree. Be sure each person is satisfied, ready to take action and that the outcome will be worth it and then the joint vision becomes more of a reality.

Does this agreement work for you? If not, explore what doesn't work for you or what you might need or want to add to make it just right.

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