

# 7 Ways Ambitious Couples Can Stay In It Together

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*Research-backed rituals, frameworks, and conversations that protect your marriage while you build something big.*

A free guide from Dave & Carrie Kerpen  
Founders, In It Together | [initttogether.ai](https://initttogether.ai)

# If you're building a business, your marriage is your co-founder.

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Entrepreneurs are nearly **twice as likely to divorce** as the general population. 70% of founders going through divorce say they can't focus on their business. The loneliest seat at the table isn't the CEO's — it's the spouse who keeps hearing “I can't talk about Forum.”

We built In It Together because the frameworks that make great entrepreneurs (Scaling Up, EOS, Vistage, YPO/EO Forum) do nothing for the person sleeping next to you. And the frameworks that make great marriages (Gottman, Enneagram, Five Love Languages) rarely show up in the rooms where ambitious people operate.

This guide pulls the 7 highest-leverage practices from 40+ years of relationship research and 20+ years of our own marriage — through a scaled-and-sold 8-figure company, three kids, a podcast, four books, and every storm entrepreneurs face. Each one takes under 20 minutes. Each one, practiced consistently, compounds.

## How to use this guide

Read it together. Pick **one** Way to try this week — not all seven. The couples who stay connected over decades don't do more; they do one small thing, consistently, on purpose.

# 01 Way #1 Run a Weekly State of the Union

**Framework:** Gottman Method

The single most researched predictor of long-term marriage health is the **weekly relationship meeting**. Dr. John Gottman found that couples who schedule a ~20-minute, structured check-in each week are dramatically less likely to divorce — not because they avoid conflict, but because they surface it before it calcifies.

Ambitious couples are great at running company meetings and terrible at running this one. Put it on the calendar. Same day. Same time. Same drink. Treat it like an investor update — because it is.

## Try this week

Sunday evening, 20 minutes. Each partner answers: (1) What went well between us this week? (2) Where did I feel disconnected? (3) What's one thing I need from you next week? No phones. No defensiveness. Just listening.

# 02 Way #2 Know Your Partner's Love Language — and Speak It

**Framework:** Gary Chapman's Five Love Languages

Most couples love their partner in their *own* love language — not in their partner's. You're a Words of Affirmation person sending constant texts. Your spouse is a Quality Time person wondering why you never put the phone down at dinner. You're both trying. You're both missing.

The five languages are: Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Acts of Service, Physical Touch, and Gifts. Knowing yours is table stakes. The unlock is knowing — and speaking — theirs.

### Try this week

Take the free quiz at [5lovelanguages.com](https://5lovelanguages.com) (separately). Compare results. Then each of you commit to one deliberate act in your partner's top language this week. Say it out loud: “This one is for you.”

# 03 Way #3 Learn Each Other's Enneagram Type

**Framework:** Enneagram

The Enneagram isn't a personality test — it's a map of what you're running from. Each of the nine types is built around a core fear and a core desire. Understanding your partner's type explains why they shut down when you push, why they over-function when you're stressed, why a tone you barely registered landed like a grenade.

Dave is a Type 3 (the Achiever). Carrie is a Type 2 (the Helper). That single sentence would have saved us a decade of friction.

## Try this week

Take the free test at [your.enneagramuniverse.com](http://your.enneagramuniverse.com) or the paid RHETI at [enneagraminstitute.com](http://enneagraminstitute.com). Share your top two types. Ask each other: "When I'm stressed, how do I get harder to love? What would help?"

# 04 Way #4 Shut Down the Four Horsemen

**Framework:** Gottman Method

Gottman can predict divorce with ~94% accuracy by watching for four specific behaviors: **Criticism** (attacking character), **Contempt** (the single biggest predictor — eye-rolling, sarcasm, mockery), **Defensiveness** (counter-attacking instead of listening), and **Stonewalling** (shutting down).

Every couple does these. Healthy couples notice them in themselves and repair. The repair is the move — not the prevention.

## Try this week

Pick one Horseman you do most. Tell your partner: “This week I’m going to catch myself being [contemptuous / defensive / etc.]. If I miss it, say the word ‘Horseman’ and I’ll pause.” Name it, own it, repair within 10 minutes.

# 05 Way #5 Protect the 5:1 Ratio

**Framework:** Gottman Method

In stable marriages, positive interactions outnumber negative ones by at least **5 to 1** — not in fights, but in ordinary daily life. A smile when they walk in. A “thank you” for dinner. A 6-second kiss goodbye. Small. Constant. Compounding.

When you're building something big, the ratio collapses. You bring your best energy to customers, investors, and employees — and your most depleted self home. The 5:1 isn't about being artificially positive. It's about protecting the emotional bank account you'll need to withdraw from during the hard seasons.

## Try this week

For three days, keep a mental tally. Every appreciation, compliment, physical touch, or moment of humor is a +1. Every criticism, eye-roll, or sharp tone is a -1. Don't fake it. Just see it.

# 06 Way #6 Build Rituals of Connection

**Framework:** Gottman + IIT practice

Great marriages aren't held together by grand gestures. They're held together by **rituals** — small, repeatable, protected moments that signal “we are a unit.” A 6-second kiss before leaving. Phone-free dinner on Tuesdays. Saturday morning coffee, no screens. A walk after the kids are in bed.

Rituals aren't rules; they're promises. They survive stress because they don't require motivation — just the calendar entry you already agreed to.

## Try this week

Design one daily ritual (under 10 minutes), one weekly ritual (under 2 hours), and one monthly ritual (a real date night, childcare handled). Write them down. Start one — just one — this week.

# 07 Way #7 Find Your Couples Peer Group

**Framework:** Vistage / EO / YPO Forum model, adapted for couples

Every ambitious person eventually learns that the people who love you most can't always *advise* you best — and that peers in the same arena can change your life. It's why YPO, EO, Vistage, and Tiger 21 exist. It's why the best CEOs pay thousands a year for a room of peers.

The same is true for ambitious couples. The loneliest people in your life are not your team; they're the two of you, separately carrying versions of the same weight. A curated group of 4–6 other couples — committed to confidentiality, skilled facilitation, and showing up monthly — isn't therapy and isn't friendship. It's the missing room.

## Try this week

If you're EO, YPO, or Vistage, you already know what a great Forum feels like. Ask yourself honestly: does your spouse have one? If not, come look at In It Together — we built the room for couples like yours.

# You don't have to figure this out alone.

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In It Together is the first peer forum for ambitious couples — like EO or YPO, but for couples where at least one person is an entrepreneur. Five couples. One world-class facilitator. Monthly 3-hour sessions combining the Gottman Method, the Enneagram, and the Five Love Languages.

We're inviting 25 founding couples for our Q2 2026 forums. If the 7 Ways resonated, you already know why we built this.

## Apply for the Founding Cohort

Monthly forum with 4 other ambitious couples, facilitated by a world-class practitioner.

→ [inittogether.ai](https://inittogether.ai)

## About Dave & Carrie Kerpen

Married at home plate at a Brooklyn Cyclones game in front of 7,000 fans. Built and sold an 8-figure company together. Raised three kids. Dave is a 4x author (NYT bestseller *Likeable Social Media*), a 16-year EO/YPO Forum member, and a longtime student of the Gottman Method. Carrie scaled Likeable Media to an 8-figure exit at 8.5x EBITDA. They've been married 20 years and are building In It Together so other ambitious couples don't have to figure it out alone.