

## 2.14 Personal Operating Manual

A way to record the key values and preferences of those who matter to you.

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When you are close to someone and love them, you may wish to actively find ways to increase their happiness, understand their values, or otherwise enrich their life. However, it can be hard to remember all the key details about others, even those whom you care about deeply.

One way to solve this problem is by creating a personal operating manual for them. Whenever you learn something new about them, noting it serves as a reminder of what they like and don't like, enabling you to retain this information and behave accordingly.

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- Helps you learn the best ways to communicate with significant people in your life.
- Can include a repository of things they enjoy, making it easier for you to express your love and affection in ways they appreciate.

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- Some people may find the concept too clinical and fear that it replaces a more heartfelt understanding.

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Ideally, begin by approaching the person you want to create a personal operating manual for and mentioning that you would like to explore this idea. Technically, you do not need their permission before creating this type of manual, but it's nicer to do this with consent. Reassure them that they don't need to do anything; you will do all the work, and they will benefit from your increased understanding of them.

The execution is relatively straightforward. Whenever you learn something new about your partner, make a note of it, either in a handwritten journal or an online document. Every argument, humorous exchange, or gentle discourse holds clues to deciphering their personality.

Your personal operating manual should serve as a live document where you note favorite foods, reactions to gifts, and other preferences. If you approach them when they're angry, what facilitates smooth conversation and what doesn't? What are their moods and principles? You can even ask deep questions, such as "What is your purpose in life?" or "What's your biggest regret?" and record the answers.

The key to making your personal operating manual usable is periodically reviewing and organizing the information you collect so that when you want to retrieve it, you know how to find what you're looking for. When you do this, you can peruse it at any time and reflect on what you're learning. This process will help you discover what truly motivates the other person, what turns them on, what intrigues them, what they dislike, and more.

