▶ Exercise: Triumphs and Strivings

This exercise is designed for you to write about some aspects of your own life and your own personality that will help both you and your partner understand you better. In your own notebook, answer the following questions as candidly as you can.

What has happened in your life that you are proud of?

Write down the story of the psychological triumphs you have had in your life, your gains, times when things went even better than you expected, periods when you were better off after coming through trials and tribulations. Include those periods of stress and duress that you survived and mastered.

> These events might have been small events, but they may still have a great deal of importance to you. They might include your childhood or your adult life. They may be challenges you have met, even if these were challenges you created for yourself to meet. They may be periods of power, with glorious events or fine people, events of closeness and intimacy, great times of friendship. They may include previous, very positive relationships or positive moments within them.

How have you coped and gotten through these hard events and periods in your life? How have you endured? What glories and victories have you experienced? What were the lasting effects on you of going through these things?

What did you take from these positive events in your life? How have they affected the way you think of yourself and your capabilities? How have they affected your goals and the things you strive for? Did these events strengthen you?

What has been your own history with the emotion of pride and with praise? How did your parents show you that they were proud of you when you were a child? How have other people responded to your accomplishments in your life?

What role does pride in your accomplishments play in your relationship? What role do your own strivings have in your relationship? Are your goals and strivings honored and valued? How so? What do you want your partner to know and understand about these aspects of your self, your present, your future plans and goals, and your past?

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