

WHAT WE LEARN FROM LOOKING BACK

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They say you shouldn't live in the past, and that's probably true. But learning from the past – that's a different story. In fact, taking time to reflect on the year gone by – whether it's a calendar year or another year of marriage – is a great way to learn more about yourself, your partner, and your relationship. So, cozy up together and talk through some of these questions, maybe even grab a piece of paper to jot down some notes. Consider them from both an individual and couple perspective.

What were your biggest challenges/struggles?

When we're in a challenging time, it's hard to overlook its existence. On one hand, not dwelling on them is part of being resilient. On the other, it's important to give ourselves credit for overcoming and accomplishing hard things. There's also the reality that you might still be struggling – acknowledge that. Not all obstacles have an end date and get tied up in a neat bow, but you can still reflect on what you've learned so far and the progress you've made.

In what areas did you thrive? What do you consider your successes?

Interestingly, some of your biggest success may have been overcoming the challenges you talked about in the previous question. It's worth celebrating! Looking back, we can see the role that our struggles play in helping us grow, and this can give us a new perspective as we take on tough endeavors in the future. There might also be areas where you kicked butt. Call them out! If you have trouble seeing your own strengths, list out each other's. And don't forget to recognize where you thrived as a couple – use these strengths to propel you as you face new challenges together.

What were your favorite memories?

Taking time to reminisce about the best moments and memories from the year not only is a fun way to connect, but it also puts things into perspective and gives us an opportunity for gratitude. Were there some tough times? Sure. Were there also some great times? Absolutely. If you're having trouble remembering what all happened over the last 12 months, this is one time we'd encourage you to scroll through your photos.

What did you appreciate about each other?

We all have our own ways of showing appreciation, but sometimes, there's no substitute for hearing it verbalized. We often see ourselves differently than others see us so you might be surprised by the ways you were a great spouse! We're also more likely to keep doing things that we know our partner appreciates, so let each other know! It's a win-win.

What do you want to leave behind? What do you want to bring with you?

This is an opportunity for an intentional fresh start. Maybe you want to leave behind bad habits or attitudes, guilt, resentment, or toxic friends. Perhaps you want to bring with you gratitude, a slower pace, and weekly date nights. Verbalizing these things is a way to create accountability and make it real, versus just an abstract idea in your head. Talk about steps you'll need to take and how you can help each other follow through on these intentions.