

point this out to them all the time only serves to increase that behavior as they begin to self-identify with that label. Is it possible that she blames her husband for the tension in the house, when her test from Hashem might have been to overcome her momentary feelings of annoyance, and be the bigger person by letting things go? Maybe she missed the opportunity to seek guidance on how to decrease tension in the house, and instead, just settled into an acceptance of it, thwarting closeness. The point is, I am not "blaming the victim" here; rather, I am pointing out valid issues that can help her to feel empowered. Rather than feeling helpless, she can begin to examine what she might do to turn the ship around. And as we all know, *teshuvah* was created before the world. It is never too late to examine our role in where our life is heading. And if we simply try, Chazal tell us that if we open a hole the size of the eye of a needle, Hashem will open up an entranceway wide enough to drive a carriage through.⁷ It all starts by examining our own actions, and owning up to everything we might be doing to impede closeness. Once we acknowledge that, the work of drawing our husband closer becomes that much easier, and we can begin to experience the full joy we have always hoped for.

Keeping a Journal — Optional Points to Ponder

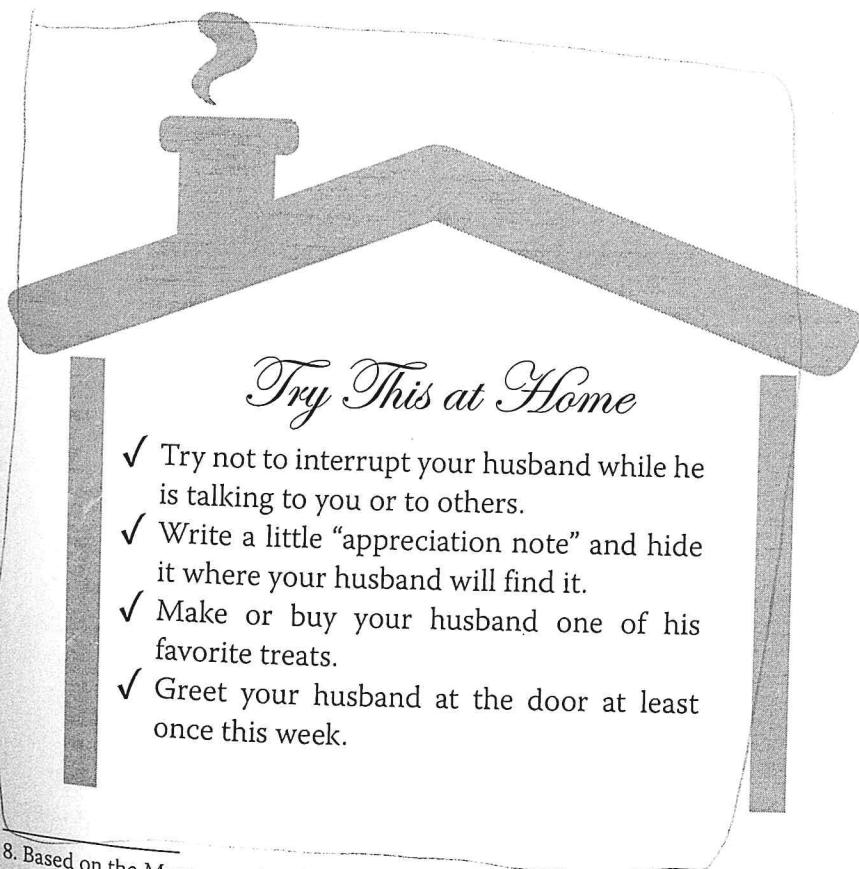
(Use a notebook, or just mull over in your spare time.)

- In what ways might society's influence have made marriage more challenging for you?
 - What "politically correct" ideas might make it more difficult for you to feel closer to your husband?
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7. *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 5:3.

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At the end of each chapter, you will find a list of “try this at home” tasks to help you to integrate the ideas from each chapter into your daily life. The goal is to try the homework once per week, or if possible, once each day. Many students take on a task and then try to continue it as often as possible even after the week is completed. As you grow, you can also choose another of the tasks for that chapter to deepen your growth in that area. Since the goal is internal growth, it is very valuable to understand the following equation: insight + action = internal growth. The more homework actions that you do, the more you will internalize the insights you have gained in this chapter, and *iy”H* the more you will grow!⁸



8. Based on the Mussar works of Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz.