

The Marriage Course
Journal

A red triangle pointing downwards, containing the text 'The Marriage Course' in white.

The
Marriage
Course

This journal belongs to:



This journal is designed to be used with The Marriage Course sessions.
Please see page 165 for more information on how to join or run a course.

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Contents

SESSION 1	
Strengthening Connection	06
SESSION 2	
The Art of Communication	24
SESSION 3	
Resolving Conflict	40
SESSION 4	
The Power of Forgiveness	56
SESSION 5	
The Impact of Family	76
SESSION 6	
Good Sex	92
SESSION 7	
Love in Action	110
Follow-on: Tools, Habits and Conversations	128
Appendices	145
Acknowledgements	164

How to use this journal

To help you get the most out of your journal, we have used symbols for specific activities:



When you write something down



When you talk with your partner



When you sit back and reflect



When you note down your intentions – for example, your plans for a date night or hopes for the future



When you swap journals and write something in your partner's journal that will be helpful for them to look back on in the future

Following the course, we hope the journal will serve as a reminder of what you've discovered about each other and the journey you're on as a couple, and help you to put into practice what you have learnt.

Welcome to The Marriage Course...

The course aims to equip you with tools to build a healthy marriage and to strengthen the connection between you as a couple – or to restore that connection if you feel you've lost it.

This journal is designed for you to be able to reflect, to talk and to dream together about your future, not only on the course but afterwards too. There are no right or wrong answers and no one else will see your journals. You won't be asked to discuss anything about your relationship with anybody else. Instead we'll be pausing at various points to allow you as a couple to discuss issues that we've raised.

We want to encourage you, whether you've been together for a short or a long time; whether you're in a good place as a couple or you're struggling – whatever your situation – you've come to the right place. We're confident that, as you engage with the material on The Marriage Course, you'll find out more about what your partner thinks and feels. However long you've been together, there's always going to be more to discover. It's only as we continue on this journey of discovery about each other that we stay connected.

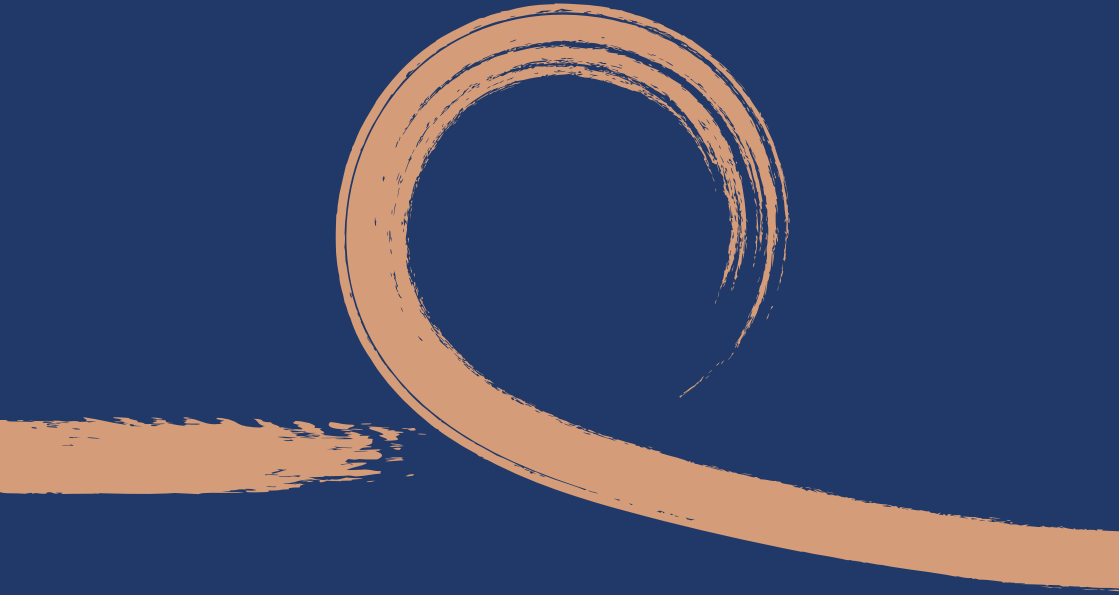


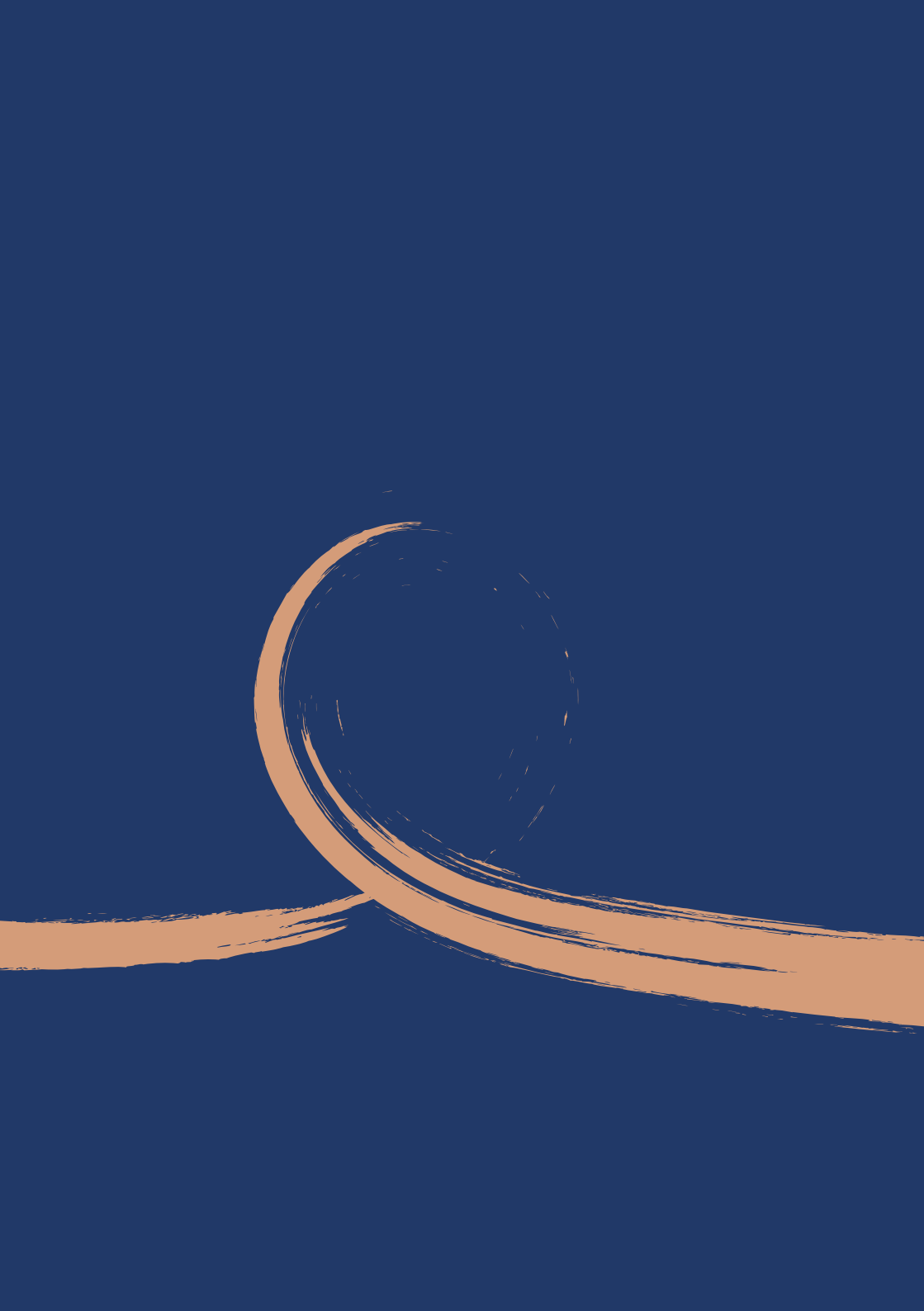
Nicky and Sila Lee

Creators of The Marriage Course

Session 1

Strengthening Connection





Marriage is designed to be the closest possible relationship of increasing intimacy and growing interdependence. But this is not automatic, we have to keep working at our marriage if we're to stay closely connected.

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

– GENESIS 2:24

Session 1 – Strengthening Connection

CONVERSATION 1

5 minutes



THE FIRST TIME YOU MET

Tell each other your strongest memory of the first time you met and what first attracted you to one another.

Tending a vineyard

Four analogies for tending a marriage:

1. Adjusting

The early years of marriage require a lot of adjustment.

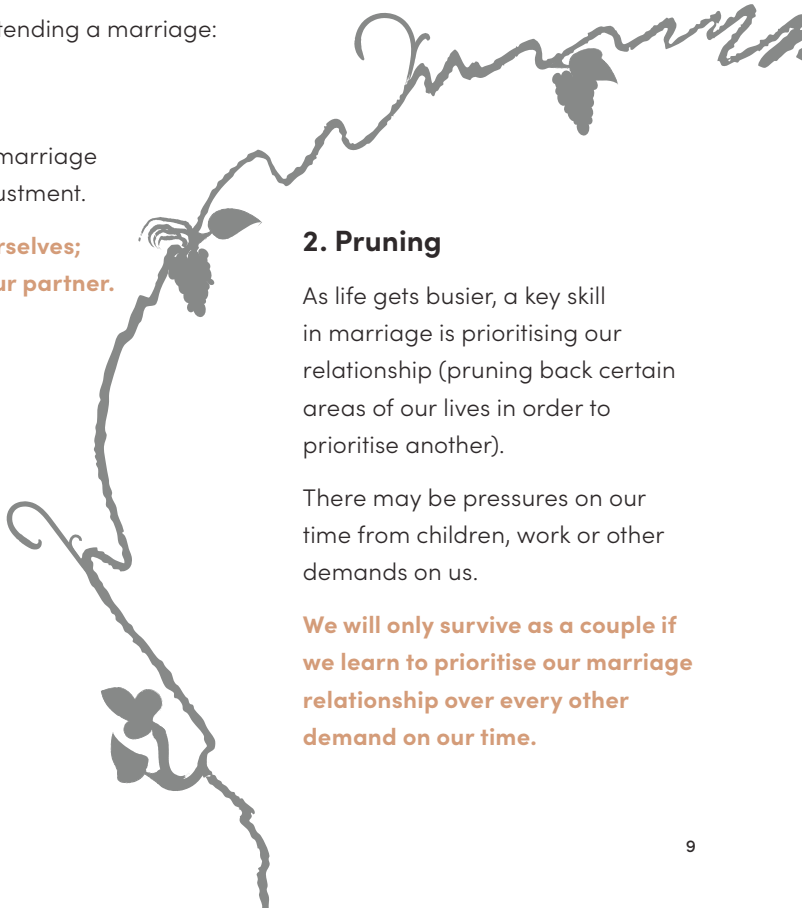
**We can change ourselves;
we can't change our partner.**

2. Pruning

As life gets busier, a key skill in marriage is prioritising our relationship (pruning back certain areas of our lives in order to prioritise another).

There may be pressures on our time from children, work or other demands on us.

We will only survive as a couple if we learn to prioritise our marriage relationship over every other demand on our time.



3. Supporting

Marriages need a support network (eg, friends and family).

We may face challenges from illness, infertility, finances, empty nest, elderly parent(s).

Supporting and encouraging each other is essential.

When we support each other, the very challenges we face can draw us closer together.

4. Renewing

Being prepared to talk about our own individual needs and desires.

Sharing with our partner our hopes for our future together.

Slowing down for long enough to decide on changes we'd like to make.

Possibly stopping certain activities in order to have more time together.

Starting something new that will strengthen or restore or renew the connection between us.



If you're struggling in your marriage, we want to encourage you that reconnecting is possible.

When couples have tended their relationship, things have changed dramatically and they go on to experience a new connection and intimacy.

CONVERSATION 2

5 minutes



WORKING THROUGH CHALLENGES

- Talk about any pressures and challenges you've worked through together in the past.
- What are the main pressures either or both of you are facing currently?
- Ask your partner, 'In what ways could I support you in working through this challenge?'

CONVERSATION 3

30 minutes



REVIEWING YOUR CONNECTION

Read through the list of statements and, using the scale below, write in the box the number that you feel corresponds to your viewpoint. Please do it on your own. When you have finished, follow the instructions on the opposite page.

0. never true 1. rarely true 2. occasionally true 3. usually true 4. always true

I feel that...

- 1. We give each other our undivided attention
- 2. We understand and support each other's beliefs and values
- 3. We show each other affection through demonstrative non-sexual touching
- 4. We are able to apologise and forgive when one of us has hurt the other
- 5. We listen to each other's point of view even when we disagree
- 6. We are able to talk about our sexual hopes and desires
- 7. We are able to talk about our hopes and dreams for the future
- 8. We are good at encouraging each other in what we each do
- 9. We make it a priority to go out together at least once a fortnight
- 10. We reflect on the good things we enjoy as a couple
- 11. We are able to talk about strong emotions such as excitement, hope, grief and anxiety
- 12. We are sensitive towards each other's sexual needs
- 13. We encourage each other's spiritual growth
- 14. We are good at meeting each other's emotional needs
- 15. We agree on our sexual practices
- 16. We discuss new ideas with each other
- 17. We support each other in the goals we have for our family life
- 18. We have a number of joint interests that we pursue together
- 19. We are both happy about the frequency of our lovemaking
- 20. We are good at listening to each other's feelings without interrupting or criticising

Results of reviewing your connection

1. Add up your scores from the statements on the opposite page as follows:

Statements about:	My score	Partner's score
Your friendship (statements 4, 8, 9, 14, 18)		
Your communication (statements 1, 5, 11, 16, 20)		
Your physical relationship (statements 3, 6, 12, 15, 19)		
Your future together (statements 2, 7, 10, 13, 17)		

2. Now discuss what you have each put, including any differences in your scores (the idea is to be understood by and to understand each other better).

3. Write something for each area that **you** could do to increase your scores:

Our friendship:

For example: *'I recognise the need for us to spend time together on our own.'*

Our communication:

For example: *'I obviously need to show you that I am interested in what you say.'*

Our physical relationship:

For example: *'I would like to be more sensitive towards your sexual desires.'*

Our future together:

For example: *'I would like to find a good time for us to have a conversation about our plans for the future.'*

When you have both finished, show each other what you have put.

Make time for each other

Making time for the people that matter most in our lives doesn't just happen; it requires a conscious decision to make it happen. If a relationship is to thrive and keep growing, we must have regular quality time together.

The benefits of a weekly date:

- keeps the fun and romance alive in our relationship
- deepens our understanding and appreciation of each other
- ensures we communicate regularly on a meaningful level

Plan to spend one to two hours alone together each week to rekindle romance, have fun and talk together about your feelings (your hopes, fears, worries, excitements).

It doesn't need to be expensive.

Golden rule:
Never change your date without consulting your partner.

How to make a weekly date happen:

Plan it into your calendar as you would a business appointment or social engagement

Prioritise it over all other activities (work, friends, sport, TV, children)

Protect it from external demands and pressures on your time, whether people, phones, social media

By doing so, we're saying to each other,
'You're the most important person to me,
and I'm giving you my full attention.'

CONVERSATION 4

5 minutes



SPECIAL TIMES TOGETHER

Tell your partner what have been the most special times you have shared together as a couple. Be specific. Talk about where and when those times were and what you were doing. Explain why they were special to you.

Nurture each other

Nurturing involves seeking to meet each other's emotional needs for affection, encouragement, support, comfort, etc.

It's as though there's an empty space inside that needs to be filled up with another person's love and attention.

- when we're known intimately, when we're loved by another, we are no longer alone; the space inside is filled up
- the way to keep filling this space inside is by recognising and meeting each other's emotional needs

We are made for close relationships and we all have a longing to be known and to be loved by another person.

The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone.'

– GENESIS 2:18

How to nurture each other

In marriage we can either be reactive or proactive:

- **being reactive is when we focus on each other's shortcomings**
- **being proactive involves focusing on each other's needs**

Proactive behaviour draws us together because each of us feels loved. When we feel loved, we feel like loving.

Study each other and recognise each other's needs. Often our partner's needs and desires will be different to our own.

We can't assume our partner automatically knows our desires. We must tell each other.

**Discover what matters to your partner.
Otherwise, we tend to give what we like
to receive.**

Husbands... live with your wives in an understanding way.

– 1 PETER 3:7 (NASB)

CONVERSATION 5

10 minutes



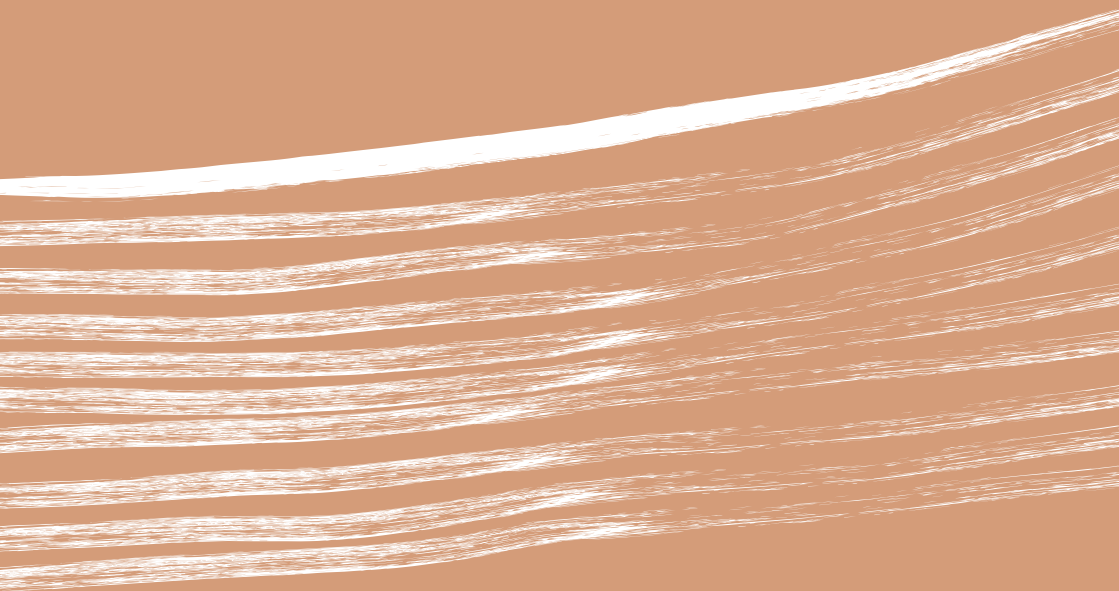
KNOWING ME, KNOWING YOU

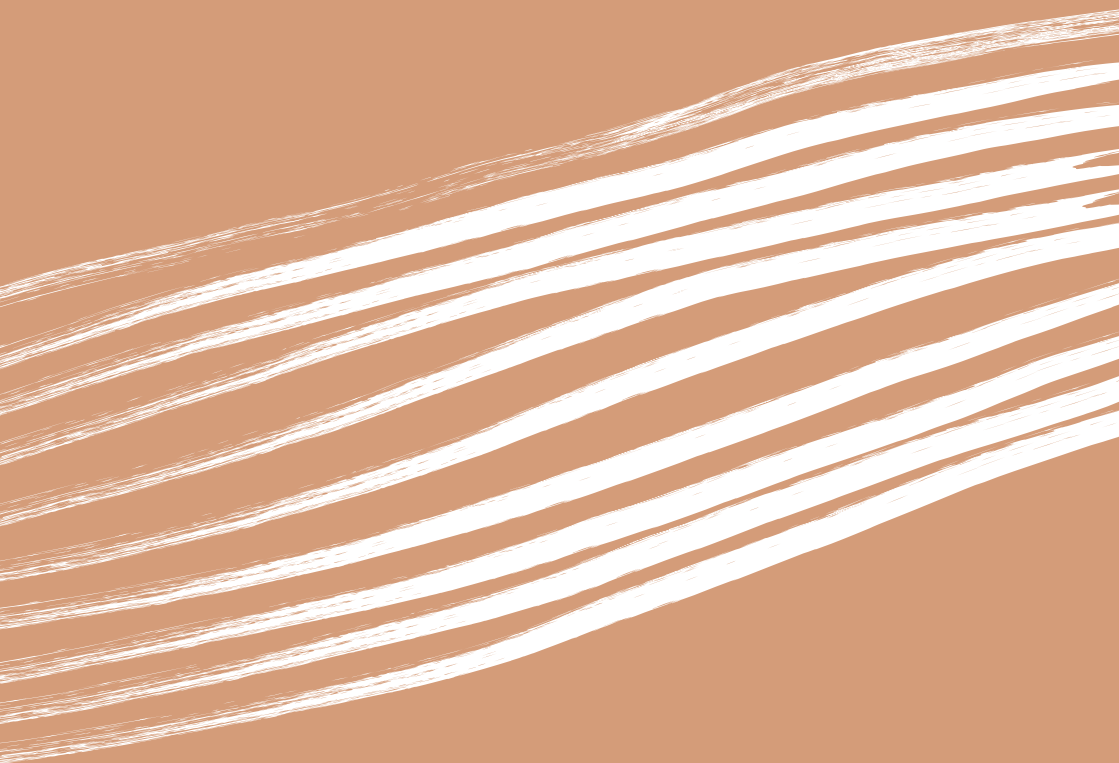
Please read through the list on the opposite page.

1. In column A, tick the three that matter most to you (that is, what you would most like your partner to give to you).
2. In column B, tick the three that you believe matter most to your partner (this is, what you think they would most like to receive from you).
NB: There is some overlap between the different desires – put those three which most clearly express your preferences.
3. When you have both finished, exchange your responses and see how well you understand your partner:
 - How close were you to selecting the three that matter most to your partner?
 - How many of the same desires did you and your partner put for yourselves? 0, 1, 2 or 3?
 - Consider which, if any, of the list of desires you tend to give least to your partner. Are these any of the three that matter most to your partner?

	A Myself (choose 3)	B My partner (choose 3)
Affirmation – being appreciated for who you are by your partner		
Approval – being commended for those things you have done well		
Companionship – doing things together and sharing experiences		
Conversation – talking together about issues of interest and importance		
Encouragement – being inspired to keep going through your partner’s words		
Openness – being confident of your partner’s honesty about every aspect of their lives, including their feelings and ideas		
Physical affection – the communication of care and closeness through physical touch		
Practical help – experiencing your partner’s help in big or small tasks		
Presents – receiving tangible expressions of love and thoughtfulness		
Respect – having your ideas and opinions considered and valued by your partner		
Security – facing the future confident of your partner’s commitment to love you and stay with you		
Sexual intimacy – having regular opportunities to express and receive love through your sexual relationship		
Support – knowing your partner is working with you to fulfil your goals		
Time together – knowing your partner has set aside time to be with you on a regular basis		
Understanding – knowing your partner is aware of what matters to you		
Undivided attention – focusing on each other to the exclusion of any distractions		

Continuing the Conversation








‘Prioritising date night is constantly the most difficult thing that we struggle to do, but the most important in terms of how it impacts our relationship.’

— Couple on The Marriage Course

Plan a date together

Be creative: your date doesn't have to look like anybody else's.

Experiment with different times. When could you have a date this week?

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Morning 							
Afternoon 							
Evening 							

My turn / your turn to organise what we do.

This week, we could.....

The thing that initially attracted me to you was...

(Complete in your partner's journal)



What interests do you have in common?

For example: *visiting art galleries, playing a sport, exploring new places, going to the cinema.*

It may be helpful to think back to some of the things you did when you first got together.



Is there a new interest that you could try doing together?

Think creatively around a new activity, or a sport, or a hobby you could take up together.

What do you enjoy doing separately?

Talk about whether you are allowing each other enough space to pursue these separate interests.

What I love about going on a date with you is...

For example: *time for deeper conversations, having fun, catching up on each other's news, getting to know you better.*



What could potentially prevent us having a weekly date?



Complete the following in your partner's journal

My dream date would be:



Save

Spend

Splurge

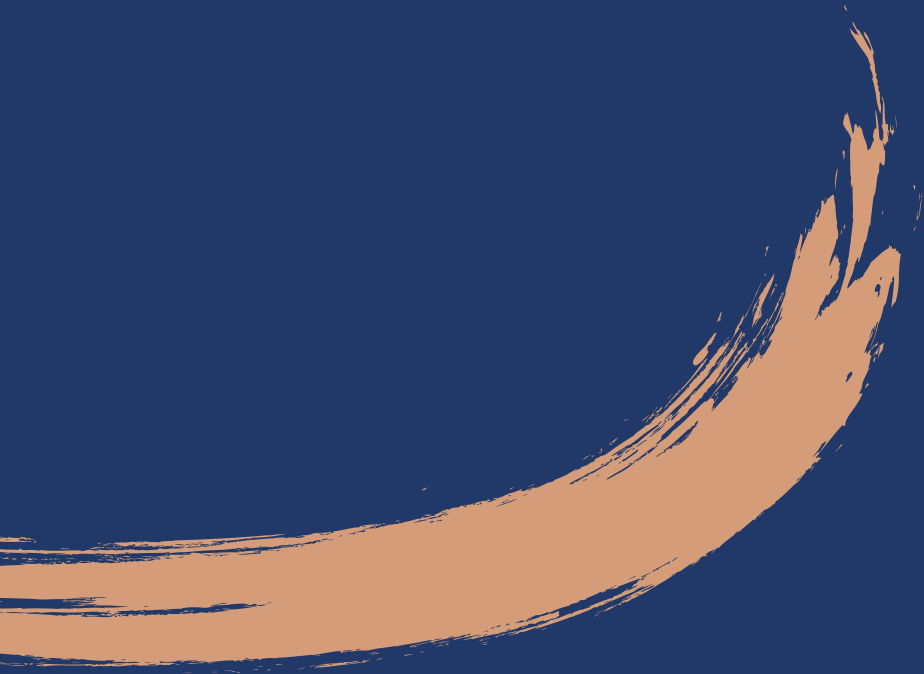
Conversation starter on your next date:

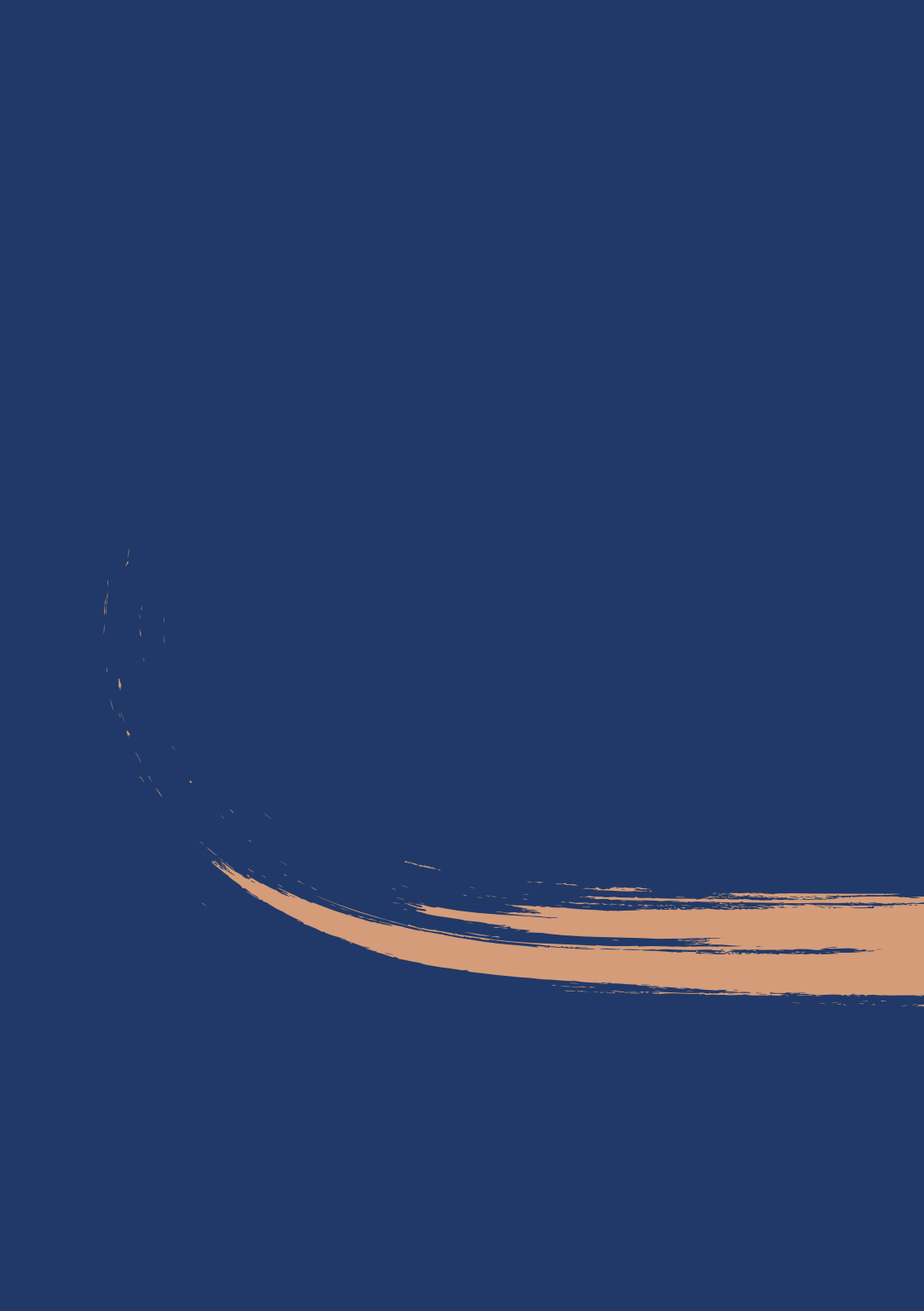
Look back to 'Knowing me, Knowing you' on pages 18–19 and ask each other, 'What could I do to meet your top three desires this week?'



Session 3

Resolving Conflict





RECAP



Complete the following sentences for your partner to read:

'Since having the 'Knowing Me, Knowing You' conversation (page 18–19),
I have appreciated you meeting my need for.....
when you.....'

'When you listened to me during the 'Reflective Listening'
conversation (page 33), I felt.....'

Session 3 – Resolving Conflict

Conflict is inevitable in every marriage – all couples disagree. It doesn't mean we have married the wrong person or that the relationship is doomed to failure.

We come into marriage with different backgrounds, desires, priorities and personalities

- it's no good trying to force our partner to do things our way
- with the right tools, addressing the conflict can strengthen the relationship
- in marriage, we are on the same side, the same team

We need to ask ourselves, 'Are there ways I need to change for the sake of our partnership?'

Four principles for handling conflict

1. Remember your partner's positive qualities

Continue to show appreciation for what you love (and admire) about your partner (even while you may disagree passionately about various issues).

The more we concentrate on the things we appreciate about each other, the more appreciative we become of each other.

Make it a daily habit.

No marriage can survive a lack of respect, a lack of positive, encouraging words being spoken to each other.

CONVERSATION 1

10 minutes



SHOWING APPRECIATION

Write down six things you appreciate about your partner. (Be specific: it may be thanking them for what they do, or it may be expressing your appreciation for who they are – try to make it a mixture – looking particularly for things you may have come to take for granted.)

For example: *'I love the way you get on so well with other people.'* *'I love the way you're so affectionate towards me.'* *'Thank you for working so hard to provide for our family.'* *'Thank you for making our home such a welcoming place to be.'* *'I really appreciate it that you fill the car up with fuel.'*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

When you have both finished, show each other what you have put.

2. Recognise that differences are good

Don't try to change each other.

Learn to accept differences of temperament, personality, upbringing and values.

Maintain a sense of humour.

See your marriage as a partnership in which you combine your strengths and support each other's weaknesses.

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you...

– ROMANS 15:7

CONVERSATION 2

10 minutes



RECOGNISING YOUR DIFFERENCES

Mark against each issue where on the line your partner's and your own preferences each lie, eg (*N = Nicky; S = Sila*)

Money	_____ S _____ N _____
	<i>Spend</i> _____ <i>Save</i>
Punctuality	_____ S _____ N _____
	<i>Have time in hand</i> _____ <i>Cut it fine</i>

ISSUE

PREFERENCE

Clothes	_____ Casual _____ Formal _____
Disagreements	_____ Thrash it out _____ Keep the peace _____
Holidays	_____ Seek adventure _____ Seek rest _____
Money	_____ Spend _____ Save _____
People	_____ Time with others _____ Time alone _____
Phone	_____ Talk at length _____ Only for making arrangements _____
Planning	_____ Make plans and stick to them _____ Be spontaneous/go with the flow _____
Punctuality	_____ Have time in hand _____ Cut it fine _____
Relaxation	_____ Go out _____ Be at home _____
Sleeping	_____ Go to bed late _____ Get up early _____
Sports	_____ Enthusiast _____ Uninterested _____
Tidiness	_____ Keep everything tidy/under control _____ Be relaxed and live in a mess _____
TV	_____ Keep it on _____ Throw it out _____

Show each other what you have put. Then find one issue where your differences can be a source of strength for your relationship.

3. Look for an ‘us’ solution

Recognise bad times to discuss disagreements.



The 10 o'clock rule

The 10 o'clock rule can be called into play by either you or your partner if you are having an argument late in the evening. It means the argument has to be paused and postponed until a better time.

Five practical steps:

1. Focus on the issue

- move the issue from between you and put it in front of you
- discuss the issue rather than attacking each other

2. Use ‘I’ statements

- avoid labelling (‘You always...’, ‘You never...’)
- describe your feelings (‘I feel undervalued when...’)

3. Listen to each other

- take it in turns to talk (the speaker holds something, as described in Session 2, to indicate whose turn it is)

4. Brainstorm possible solutions

- make a list if necessary

5. Decide on the best solution for now and review later

- if it’s not working, try another solution from your list

If you’ve realised that anger is an issue for you, don’t be afraid to seek help.

Ask your course leader for information about where to find this.

Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in someone else’s eye, and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?... first take the plank out of your own eye and then you’ll see clearly to remove the speck from the other person’s eye.

– MATTHEW 7:3,5

CONVERSATION 3

30 minutes



USING THE FIVE STEPS

1. Identify the best times and the worst times to discuss disagreements.

Our best times are.....

Our worst times are.....

2. Tell your partner which of the five steps you think is the most important for you.

3. Each choose an issue which causes, or could potentially cause, conflict between you.

My issue:

Your issue:

4. Taking one issue at a time, take it in turns to express your point-of-view.

The one speaking should hold something, such as a handkerchief, to remind you whose turn it is.

5. Choose one of the issues

Together brainstorm some possible solutions.

(Don't rule out any at this stage. Be aware some may involve one or both of you making a change.)

Choose the best solution for now...

Agree to review the solution in.....weeks.

6. Take the other issue

Together brainstorm some possible solutions.

Choose the best solution for now...

Agree to review the solution in.....weeks.

4. Support your partner

When we expect our partner to meet all our needs, we inevitably fail each other and get hurt, causing our marriage to spiral downwards.

Focus more on meeting your partner's needs rather than expecting them to meet yours.

Ask your partner, 'How can I make your day better?'

When we look to God to meet our needs for unconditional love, we are able to focus more easily on each other's needs (see diagram below).



This describes a husband and wife with God at the centre of their relationship. To find out more about the Christian faith, consider doing Alpha together – go to alpha.org to find out more.

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

– PSALM 46:1

Praying for each other helps us connect on a regular basis

- five to ten minutes a day is generally better than one hour every month
- ask each other, 'What can I pray for you today?'
- draw on God's promises from the Bible and start with thankfulness
- the closer each of us is individually in our relationship with God, the closer we will be to each other as husband and wife as in the triangle diagram opposite
- if one of you has upset the other, say sorry and forgive each other before praying

“

A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

ECCLESIASTES 4:12

If you don't pray, find other ways to support each other on a daily basis

CONVERSATION 4

5 minutes



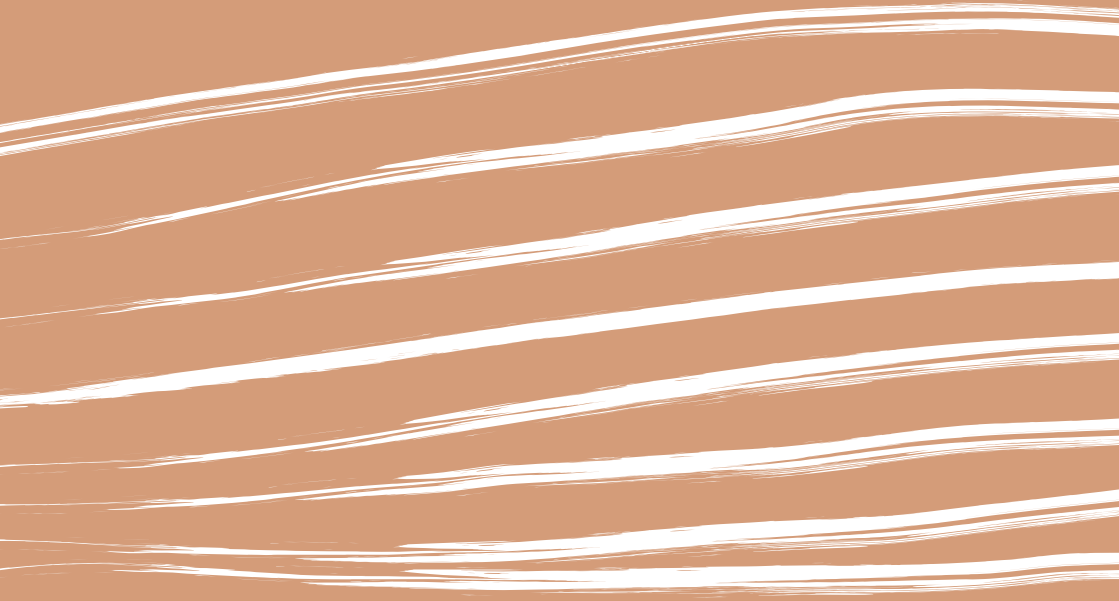
SUPPORTING EACH OTHER

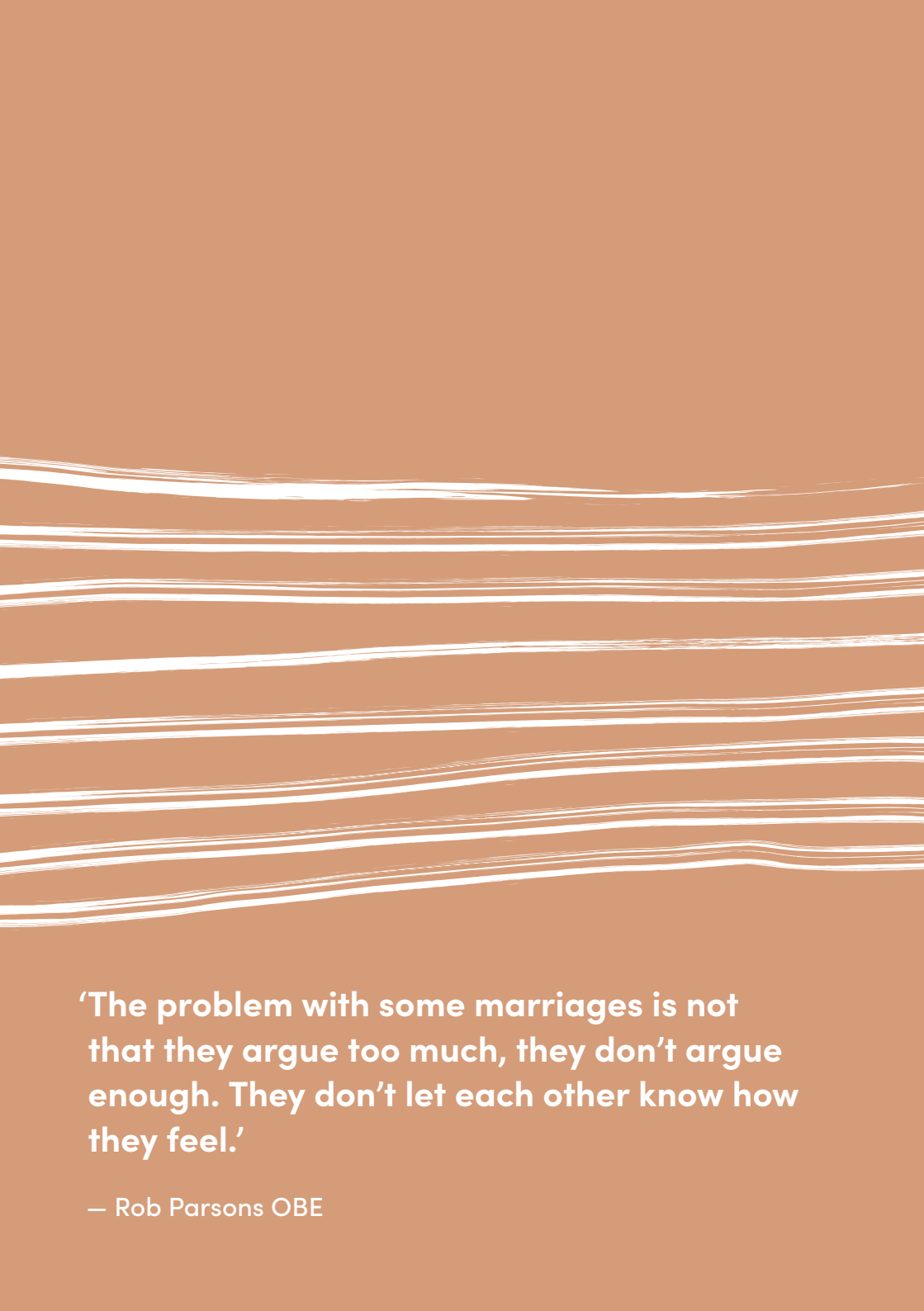
Ask your partner if there's something they're concerned about at the moment. Then, if you're comfortable praying, pray for each other – aloud or silently. Otherwise, express your support in some other way.

What could you do daily to connect and support your partner more?



Continuing the Conversation








'The problem with some marriages is not that they argue too much, they don't argue enough. They don't let each other know how they feel.'

— Rob Parsons OBE

Plan a date together

 <i>Morning</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thurs</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>	<i>Sun</i>
 <i>Afternoon</i>							
 <i>Evening</i>							

My turn / your turn to organise what we do.

This week, we could.....

What could you do to make your partner feel like he / she is the most important person to you?



Conversation starter on your next date:

Talk about when you have laughed together the most and how you can deliberately create more times of laughing together.





This week I plan to...

(Write in something kind you could do to make your partner's week better.)



Which of the differences between us is most obviously complementary?



When is a good time / where is a good place to discuss issues that cause us conflict?



The main issue that causes conflict for us is around...

Appendix 1 contains additional conversations to address specific areas of conflict. Go to the relevant page(s) for your area(s) of conflict:

Money and possessions: page 146

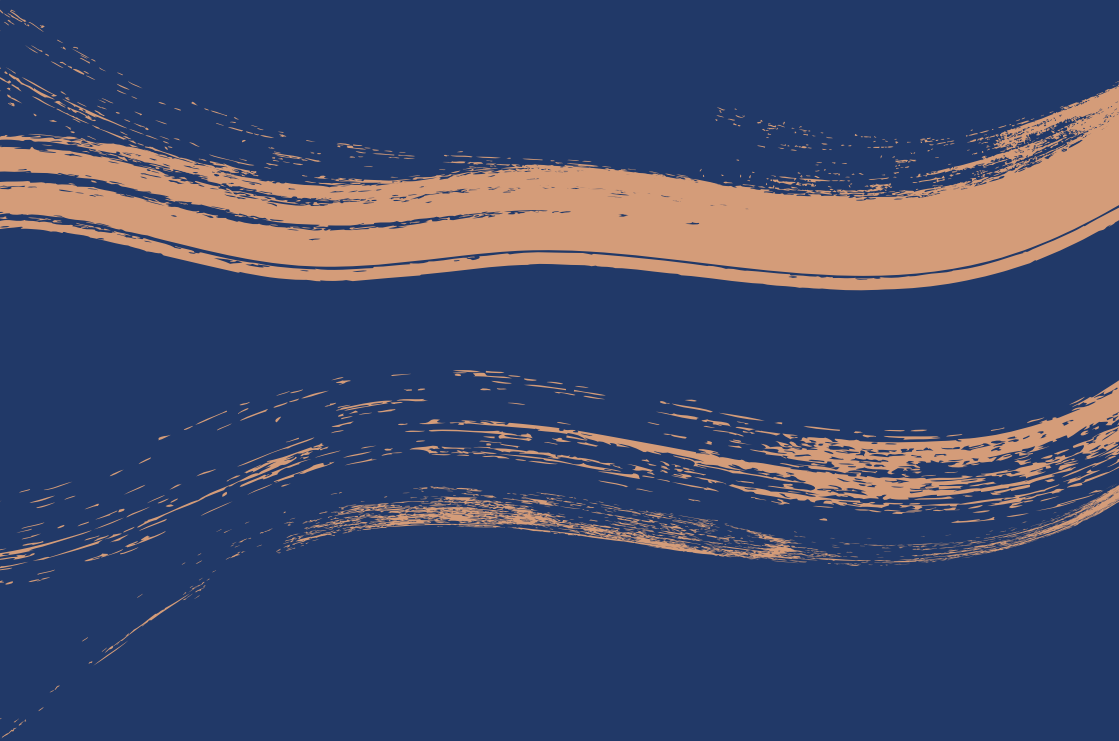
Household chores: page 149

How you spend your free time: page 152

Parenting: page 155

Session 7

Love in Action





RECAP



Ask your partner:

'What do you think has been the most important thing for our relationship from the course so far?'

Then tell them:

'Last week I realised the best thing I can do to improve our sex life is...'

Session 7 – Love in Action

Love is about more than feelings; it's about what we do – it involves action. Love always costs us something.

The five love languages¹

1. Loving words
2. Thoughtful presents
3. Physical affection
4. Quality time
5. Kind actions

For each of us, one of these 'love languages' will communicate love more effectively than the others.

Most people have different love languages to their partner.

Often we try to communicate love in the way we understand it and want to receive it.

A marriage that is full of love is where we are seeking to meet our husband or wife's needs in the particular way that makes them feel loved.

Using our partner's love language may feel unnatural and awkward initially.

¹ The teaching on the Five Love Languages is adapted from Dr Gary Chapman's bestselling book, *The 5 Love Languages®: The Secret to Love That Lasts* (© 2015). Published by Northfield Publishing. Used by permission.

1. Loving words

Words have great power either to build up or to put down our partner.

Give compliments and encourage each other daily.

Speak kindly to each other.

For some people, hearing words of affirmation feels like arriving at an oasis in a desert.

“

Words affect love. And without loving words, relationships begin to die.

ROB PARSONS, OBE

Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

– PROVERBS 16:24

2. Thoughtful presents

Presents are visual symbols of love.

Giving presents is a way of investing in our marriage

- can be inexpensive but have high value; for example: a single flower, a bar of chocolate
- don't wait only for special occasions
- actively discover what your partner likes (within your budget!)

CONVERSATION 1

10 minutes



FAVOURITE PRESENTS

Tell your partner what have been the best presents you've received from them. Explain why.

3. Physical affection

Affectionate touch is a powerful communicator of love in marriage

- if this is your partner's primary way of feeling loved, in times of crisis touch will communicate more than anything else that you care

We need to use the whole range and find out from our partner what's appropriate at different moments: holding hands, putting an arm round each other's shoulder or waist, a kiss, a hug, a hand on a hand, a back massage, sexual foreplay, making love

- both sexual and non-sexual touch are important in marriage

“

To touch my body is to touch me. To withdraw from my body is to distance yourself from me emotionally.

DR GARY CHAPMAN

4. Quality time

Married couples can spend a lot of time together without using it to convey love to each other.

Togetherness means more than physical proximity

- it involves focusing our attention on our partner

Quality time together builds friendship through:

1. Talking together

Important to share our thoughts, feelings, hopes, fears, disappointments.

I need to talk more listen more

2. Eating together

Make the effort to initiate conversation.

Ask questions that the other will enjoy answering.

Our meal times would be improved if I...

3. Having fun together

Friendship is built around shared experiences and shared memories.

CONVERSATION 2

10 minutes



TIMES TOGETHER

Each write a list of what you have most enjoyed doing together in the past or perhaps would like to start doing together:

Show each other what you have put. Use your lists as ideas when planning your future dates.

5. Kind actions

This involves expressing love through serving our partner, through seeking to meet their needs in practical ways.

Find out from your partner what kind actions are most meaningful for them.

**When you're both busy, ask your partner,
'Is there something I can do to help you?'
It doesn't always have to be fair.**

Do to others as you would have them do to you.

– LUKE 6:31

Learning to love

Jesus Christ showed love in all five ways:



1. Words

'As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.'

John 15:9

2. Time

'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place.'

Mark 6:31

3. Actions

'He poured some water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet.'

John 13:5

4. Touch

'Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man.'

Luke 5:13

5. Presents

'Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted.'

John 6:11

Love is not just a feeling – it requires an act of the will to meet each other's needs. We are called to imitate the love of Jesus.

My command is this: love each other as I have loved you.

– JOHN 15:12

CONVERSATION 3

30 minutes



DISCOVERING YOUR LOVE LANGUAGES

Please do questions 1 and 2 on your own and share your responses before filling in questions 4 and 5.

1. Write down up to 12 specific occasions through which you have known your partner's love for you. (It could be at any stage in your relationship – before or after marriage. These may be regular or rare events and could be deemed of major or minor significance.)

I have known your love for me when...

For example:

'We sat under the stars talking about our future when we were going out.'

'You gave me that watch on our wedding anniversary.'

'You cooked a special meal for my birthday.'

'You said how proud you were of me when I was promoted.'

'You spontaneously put your arm around me when we were waiting for the film to start.'

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

12.

2. Taking into consideration your answers to question 1, put the five ways of showing love in order of importance for you, where 1 = most important and 5 = least important. Then consider in which order of importance you think they come for your partner.

For you (number 1–5)	Love languages	For your partner (number 1–5)
	Loving words Thoughtful presents Physical affection Quality time Kind actions	

3. Now, compare and discuss with your partner what each of you put for questions 1 and 2.
4. Looking at your partner's number one 'love language' (ie, the most important for them), list three ways in which you could communicate love to your partner this week or this month. (Try to keep within the bounds of reality!)
- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
5. Looking at your partner's second 'love language' (ie, the second most important for them), list three more ways in which you could communicate love to your partner effectively this week or this month.
- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

Go online to www.5lovelanguages.com to fill in a short questionnaire to confirm the order of importance of these love languages for you.

The adventure of love for a lifetime

Marriage is a journey; it's designed to be a dynamic relationship that keeps changing and developing.

Expressing our commitment to each other is essential to the success of the journey.

Commitment is liberating as it means we can:

- take a long view
- plan our future together
- look beyond current difficulties



Love does not consist of gazing at each other, but in looking together in the same direction.

– ANTOINE DE ST EXUPÉRY

“

Every marriage is a really big commitment to the people. It's a commitment that says, 'I'm prepared not only to spend the rest of my life with you, but to spend the rest of my life finding out about you. There's always more of you to discover.'

DR ROWAN WILLIAMS (FORMER ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY)

CONVERSATION 4

5 minutes



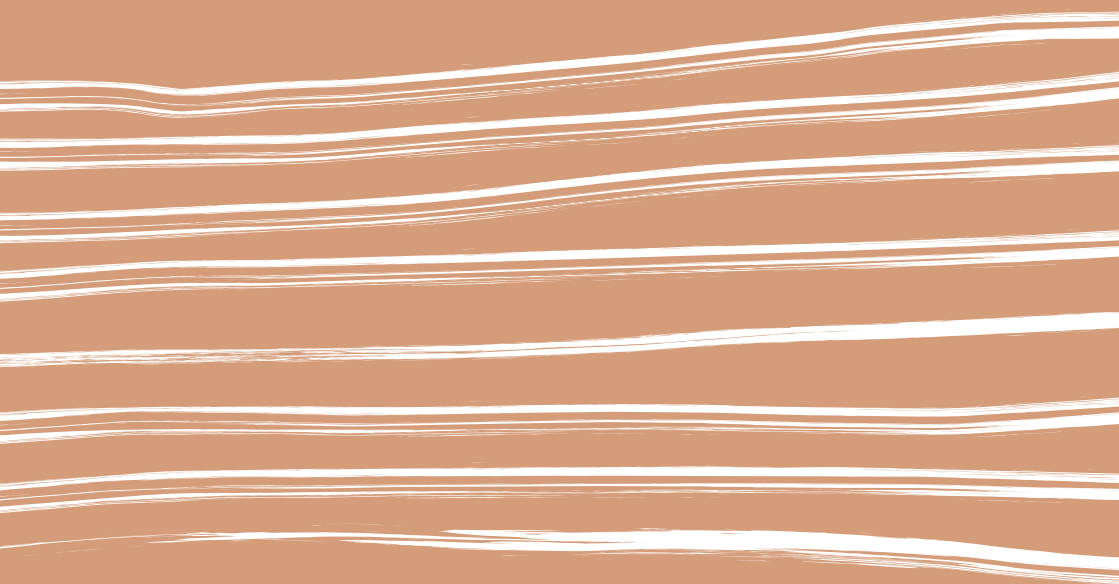
SUPPORTING EACH OTHER

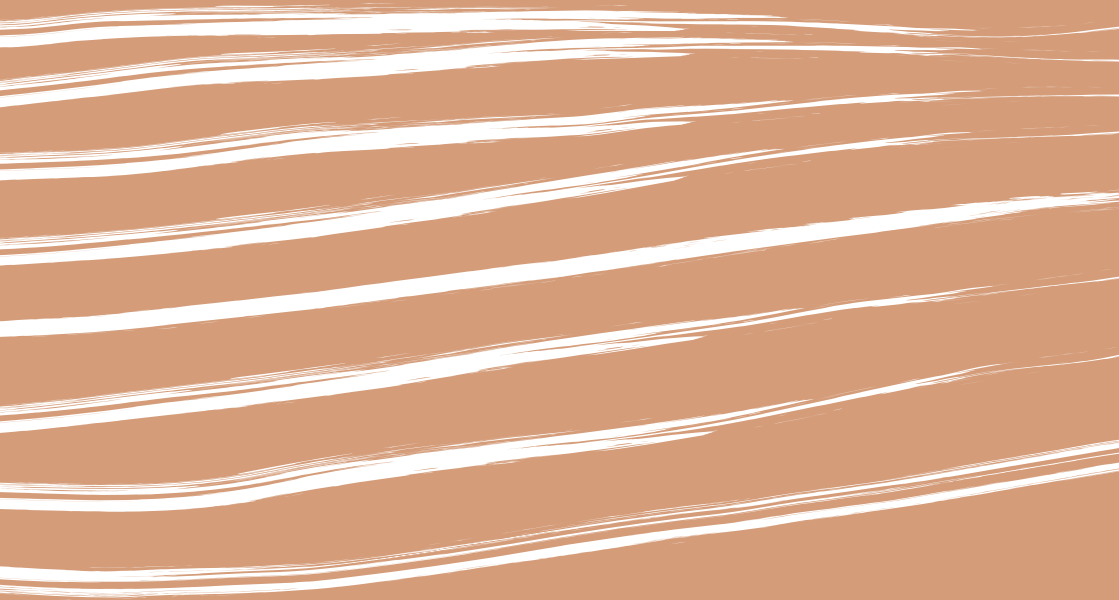
- Ask your partner if there's something particular regarding your future together for which they'd like your understanding and support.
- If you feel comfortable, say a prayer for each other, aloud or silently. Otherwise, express your support in some other way.

Love and faithfulness meet together...

– PSALM 85:10

Continuing the Conversation





'A marriage that is full of love is where we are seeking to meet our husband or wife's needs in the particular way that makes them feel loved.'

— Nicky and Sila Lee

Plan a date together



Morning



Afternoon



Evening

<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thurs</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>	<i>Sun</i>

My turn / your turn to organise what we do.

This week, we could.....

Ideas for our dates this month...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Write in your partner's journal a kind action that you would really appreciate this week.



Putting the course into practice

Five things I especially want to remember and practise from
The Marriage Course:



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Show each other what you have written.

Five things you would like me to remember and practise from
The Marriage Course? Write them below:



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Conversation starter on your next date:

Now we have finished the course, how can we maintain a date
night routine?

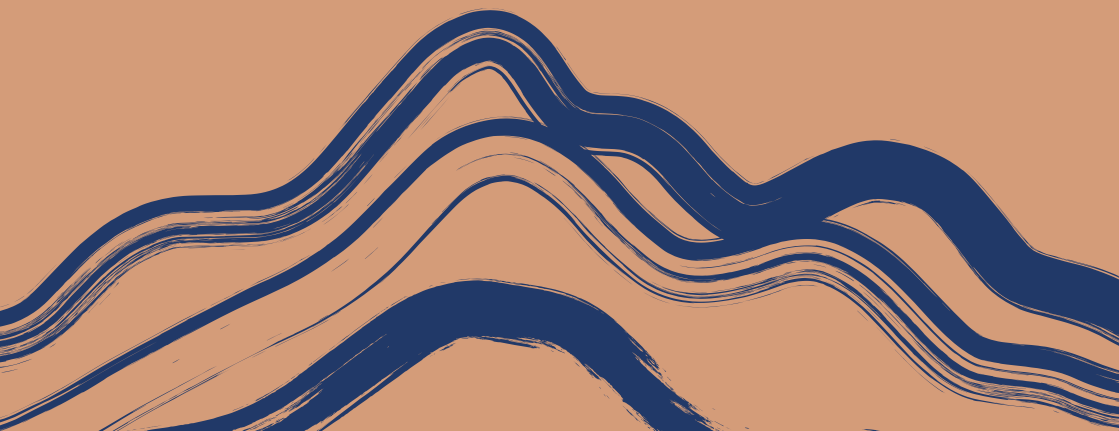


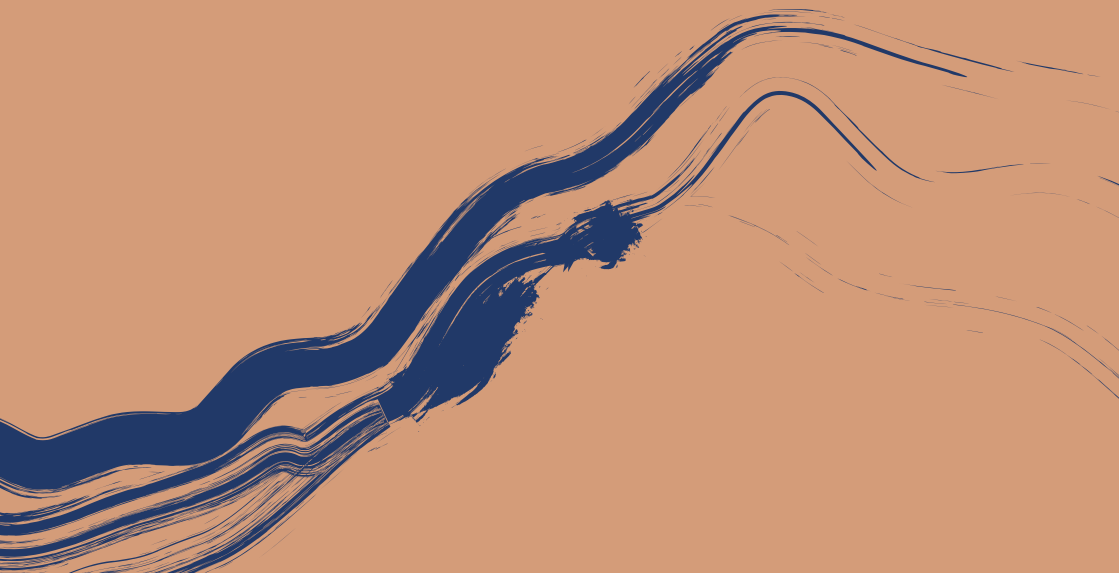
What is the best sort of date to help us connect as a couple?

How can we make it happen?

For example: *putting boundaries around work, finding a babysitter, budgeting etc.*




Tools, Habits and Conversations





Week 1: Good times together

Plan a date together

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
 Morning							
 Afternoon							
 Evening							

My turn / your turn to organise what we do.

This week, we could.....

GOLDEN RULE: Never change your date without consulting your partner.

“

Date night for us is a fun time, when we're relaxing and doing something different to our normal routine. Sometimes it's during the day, but usually it's in the evening for at least two hours around a meal.

NICKY AND SILA LEE

When I first saw you on our wedding day I felt...






Conversation starter on your next date:

Ask each other, 'What have been the best dates we've been on together?' Why were those times together so enjoyable for you?



Week 2: Communicating well

Plan a date together

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
 Morning							
 Afternoon							
 Evening							

My turn / your turn to organise what we do.

This week, we could.....

Two people can be living in the same house, sleeping in the same bed, yet, if they don't communicate at the level of their feelings, they can be like strangers towards each other.

I love talking about...



I find it difficult to talk about...

Have a conversation using the 'Reflective Listening' tools (page 33).
Take it in turns to choose an issue you haven't discussed recently.




Conversation starter on your next date:

Ask each other, 'If money and time was no object, what would be your ideal holiday destination?' Get specific! What kind of place would it be? Where would you eat? What would you do all day?



Week 3: Handling disagreements

Plan a date together

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Morning 							
Afternoon 							
Evening 							

My turn / your turn to organise what we do.

This week, we could.....

Three things I love about you...



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

One key difference between us is...



Discuss how this can be a strength, not a weakness, in your relationship.

One area I could make an effort to change for the sake of our relationship is...



Conversation starter on your next date:






Ask each other, 'What good traditions or habits have we created in our marriage?' If you can't think of any, talk about how you could create some traditions that are unique to you. They may seem relatively trivial but they will build special memories in your marriage.

For example: *an early morning swim each New Year's Day; a takeaway every Wednesday; going away on a particular weekend every year; creating a playlist for each other's birthdays.*

Week 4: Keeping the drain clear

Plan a date together

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
 Morning							
 Afternoon							
 Evening							

My turn / your turn to organise what we do.

This week, we could.....

This week I appreciated it when you...



When you feel hurt, are you able to tell your partner?



Do you think it is important to actually say the words 'I'm sorry' (without making excuses) and 'I forgive you'?



This process of forgiveness will eventually become second nature but, until you get used to it, it can be helpful to follow the steps in the forgiveness session:

1. Talk about the hurt
2. Say sorry
3. Forgive

If one of you is feeling hurt by your partner, work through the 'Healing Unresolved Hurt' conversation on page 73.




Conversation starter on your next date:

Tell your partner what you see in them that you don't see in anyone else. Tell them things that you are grateful to them for, things you admire in them and things that you see as emerging qualities in them.



Week 5: Wider family relationships

Plan a date together

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
 Morning							
 Afternoon							
 Evening							

My turn / your turn to organise what we do.

This week, we could.....

When we support one another and put in a right boundary, it gives us a great sense of emotional closeness and it prevents family members from driving a wedge between us.

You make me feel so valued when you...



What did you discover on the course about the differences between your families?



What changes have you agreed to put in place to better support / improve your relationships with your parents / in-laws / wider family?






Conversation starter on your next date:

Ask each other, 'What does your ideal weekend look like?' If it seems your weekends are more geared to one of you than the other, talk about how you could balance it out and do more of the things that the other one likes to do.



Week 6: Strengthening your physical connection

Plan a date together

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Morning 							
Afternoon 							
Evening 							

My turn / your turn to organise what we do.

This week, we could.....

I feel so loved when you...



Based on your Continuing Conversation on page 108, talk about what you each can do to make your sexual relationship more enjoyable for your partner.



I feel in the mood for sex when you...



Tell each other what you enjoy - don't leave it to guesswork.




Conversation starter on your next date:

What has been the season in our relationship when we've had the most fun together? Why do you think that was? What was happening at that time? How could we engender more fun and more laughter in our relationship now?



Week 7: Using the love languages

Plan a date together

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
 Morning							
 Afternoon							
 Evening							

My turn / your turn to organise what we do.

This week, we could.....

Love is about what we do - it involves action and is a choice we make for the sake of another person that will always cost us something.

Go back to Conversation 3 on page 120



My main love languages are...

Your main love languages are...

Ask your partner to complete the sentence for you:

One thing I could do to make you feel loved is...



Ask each other:

When have your different love languages caused misunderstanding between you?



To ensure my partner feels loved in the future, I will regularly...



Conversation starter on your next date:

What do you think will help us most to keep having regular dates in 10, 20 or 30 years' time? What difference will it make in our marriage?



Appendix 1

Resolving common areas of conflict



The following four exercises help couples recognise the reasons behind common areas of conflict:

Money and possessions: page 146

Household chores: page 149

How you spend your free time: page 152

Parenting: page 155

Complete and discuss together the exercise(s) relevant to you.

Exercise 1 – Money and possessions

1. Each of you circle the phrases that best describe your feelings (and the messages you received from your family) about money and possessions as you grew up.

<p>Scrimped and saved</p> <p>Had everything we wanted</p> <p>Had everything we needed</p>	<p>Broken things mended</p> <p>Broken things thrown away</p>	<p>Always short of money</p> <p>Always enough money</p>
<p>Worried about family running out of money</p> <p>No worries about money</p>	<p>Encouraged to give money / possessions away</p> <p>Saved as much as possible</p>	<p>Enjoyed shopping – seen as a leisure activity</p> <p>Shopping kept to a minimum</p>
<p>Money spent only on essentials</p> <p>Money spent on luxuries</p>	<p>Credit cards made use of</p> <p>Credit cards avoided</p>	<p>Loved getting presents</p> <p>Loved giving presents</p>
<p>Took plenty of time to relax</p> <p>Adults always working</p>	<p>Taught how to save money</p> <p>Not taught how to save money</p>	<p>Confident handling money</p> <p>Confusion or fear about money</p>
<p>Felt self-sufficient as a family</p> <p>Money / bills caused arguments</p>	<p>Family finances remained a mystery</p> <p>Family finances explained</p>	<p>As a child given allowance / taught to handle money</p> <p>Adults handled all money</p>

Other significant words / phrases that describe your attitude to money and possessions now:

Show each other what you have put and discuss any differences.

2. Our values regarding money and possessions (ie what is most important to us).

For example:

1. *Not worrying about money*
2. *Honesty*
3. *Generosity*
4. *Saving as much as possible*
5. *Sticking to our budget*

Write your own list before looking at your partner's and writing your 'agreed list'.

My list

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Our agreed list

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Please turn over

Exercise 1 (continued)

3. Write down an area of conflict regarding money and possessions. Together write down any possible solutions you can think of. Then put your agreed solution for now.

For example:

Issue	Possible solutions	Agreed solution for now
<i>Car keeps breaking down</i>	<i>Buy another car now</i> <i>Spend enough money to mend the car properly</i> <i>Change the car in 6 months</i> <i>Use public transport</i> <i>Find a different mechanic</i> <i>Change the car the next time it breaks down</i>	<i>Find a different mechanic</i>

Issue	Possible solutions	Agreed solution for now

Exercise 2 – Household chores

1. Each of you circle the phrases that best describe your feelings (and the messages you received from your family as you grew up) about household chores.

<p>Housework shared – no traditional gender roles</p> <p>Traditional roles (eg mother cooked; father did maintenance)</p> <p>Employed a cleaner / other household staff</p>	<p>Grew up in city (with no garden)</p> <p>Grew up in suburbs (some outdoor work)</p> <p>Grew up in country / on a farm (lots of outdoor work)</p>
<p>Chores assigned in an organised manner</p> <p>Children not expected to help around the house</p> <p>Children responsible for many household chores</p>	<p>Parent(s) did a lot of DIY projects / maintenance</p> <p>Parents preferred to call contractor when things needed repair</p>
<p>Grew up in neat, organised home</p> <p>Grew up in messy, disorganised home</p>	<p>Confident with DIY projects</p> <p>Uncomfortable with DIY</p>
<p>House cleaned and tidied regularly</p> <p>Allowed mess to accumulate and then cleaned</p>	<p>Take turns to do chores as and when needed (relaxed approach)</p> <p>Prefer to divide chores and have fixed roles</p> <p>Create a chart for who does what</p>
<p>Enjoyed helping around the house as a child</p> <p>Disliked helping around the house as a child</p>	<p>Enjoy cooking</p> <p>Do not enjoy cooking</p> <p><i>Please turn over</i></p>

Exercise 2 (continued)

Other significant words / phrases that describe your attitude to household chores:

Show each other what you have put and discuss any differences.

2. Our values regarding household chores (ie what is most important for us).

For example:

1. *Share household chores equally*
2. *Make our home feel 'lived in' and relaxed*
3. *Pay for household maintenance*
4. *Keep our home clean and tidy*
5. *Limit the amount of time we spend on household chores and DIY*

Write your own list before looking at your partner's and writing your 'agreed list'.

My list

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Our agreed list

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

3. Write down an area of conflict regarding household chores. Each write down any possible solutions you can think of. Then put your agreed solution for now.

For example:

Issue	Possible solutions	Agreed solution for now
<p><i>Both husband and wife are employed full-time – who does the cleaning?</i></p>	<p><i>Do chores as needed – whoever has the time</i></p> <p><i>Create a chart, assigning chores to each person</i></p> <p><i>Take turns each week / weekend</i></p> <p><i>Employ someone to clean the house</i></p> <p><i>Do chores together at weekends</i></p> <p><i>Assign some chores to older children</i></p>	<p><i>Create a chart to assign chores and employ a cleaner to come in once each week</i></p>
Issue	Possible solutions	Agreed solution for now

Exercise 3 – How you spend free time

1. Each of you circle the words or phrases that best describe your feelings (and the messages you received from your family as you grew up) about how to spend free time.

<p>Structured and planned</p> <p>Flexible and spontaneous</p>	<p>Preferred spending summer holidays staying with wider family</p> <p>Preferred holidays spent at home</p>	<p>Weekends well planned</p> <p>Weekends relaxed and casual</p> <p>Weekends used for socialising</p> <p>Weekends used to catch up on chores</p>
<p>Relaxing, low activity holidays</p> <p>High activity holidays</p> <p>Play a lot of sport on holiday</p>	<p>Luxury travel</p> <p>Budget travel</p>	<p>TV watched infrequently</p> <p>TV a central part of family life</p>
<p>Enjoyed having guests in our home</p> <p>Preferred not having many guests in our home</p>	<p>Involved in many sports / activities</p> <p>Hobbies / intellectual pursuits important</p> <p>Not involved in many activities or sports</p>	<p>Mealtimes central to family life</p> <p>No importance attached to mealtimes</p>
<p>Parents went out together frequently without children</p> <p>Parents stayed at home and we had fun together as a family</p>	<p>Public holidays spent at home</p> <p>Public holidays spent visiting family</p>	<p>Most free time spent as a couple</p> <p>Most free time spent as an individual</p> <p>Most free time spent with friends and family</p>
<p>Ate most meals at home</p> <p>Ate many meals in restaurants</p>	<p>Spent a lot of time with extended family</p> <p>Rarely saw extended family</p>	<p>Morning person – get up early and go to bed early</p> <p>Evening person – sleep in late and stay up late</p>

Other significant words / phrases that describe your attitude regarding how you like to spend your free time:

Show each other what you have put and discuss any differences.

2. Our values regarding free time (ie what is most important to us).

For example:

1. *Structured / planned*
2. *Travelling together*
3. *Mealtimes important*
4. *Entertain friends in our home*
5. *Time to pursue individual hobbies*

Write your own list before looking at your partner's and writing your 'agreed list'.

My list

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Our agreed list

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Please turn over

Exercise 3 (continued)

3. Write down an area of conflict regarding how you spend free time. Each write down any possible solutions you can think of. Then put your agreed solution for now.

For example:

Issue	Possible solutions	Agreed solution for now
<i>Where to spend Christmas</i>	<i>Visit family further away</i> <i>Divide holiday between family time and time on own</i> <i>Host both families at home</i> <i>Go away for Christmas</i> <i>Choose destination / resort for families to meet together</i> <i>Take turns each year visiting different sides of the family</i>	<i>Spend Christmas alone at home and then travel to see extended family after Christmas Day</i>

Issue	Possible solutions	Agreed solution for now

Exercise 4 – Parenting

1. Each of you circle the words or phrases that best describe your feelings (and the messages you received from your family as you grew up) about parenting.

<p>Strict / disciplinarian</p> <p>Relaxed / informal</p> <p>Balance of love and firm boundaries</p>	<p>Lots of affection and expressions of love</p> <p>Little affection and expressions of love</p>	<p>Encouraging / accepting</p> <p>Performance-based and somewhat critical</p>
<p>No arguing in front of children</p> <p>A lot of arguing in front of children</p>	<p>Encouraged to express negative emotions</p> <p>Stoic and non-emotional</p>	<p>Spanking used to discipline</p> <p>'Time out', grounding and other forms of discipline used</p> <p>Children allowed to do what they liked</p>
<p>Attended church and prayed together</p> <p>Did not regularly attend church or pray together</p>	<p>Parents very involved in children's activities</p> <p>Parents not very involved in children's activities</p>	<p>Encouraged as children to be increasingly independent</p> <p>Sheltered – independence not encouraged</p>
<p>Money invested in education</p> <p>No money available to invest in education</p> <p>No desire to invest in education</p>	<p>Pressure to achieve</p> <p>Relaxed and allowed to find own level</p>	<p>Calm and quiet – disagreements avoided</p> <p>Disagreements aired with much discussion and passion</p>
<p>Allowed as much screen time as liked</p> <p>Limited on amount of screen time allowed</p>	<p>Regularly spent time as a family having fun together</p> <p>Rarely had fun together as a family</p> <p>Dreaded being together as a family</p>	

Please turn over

Exercise 4 (continued)

Other significant words / phrases that describe your attitude to parenting:

Show each other what you have put and discuss any differences.

2. Our values regarding parenting (ie what is most important for us).

For example:

1. *Set clear boundaries for the children*
2. *Be affectionate (lots of hugs and kisses)*
3. *Spend regular time together as a family having fun*
4. *Support each other in front of the children*
5. *Pass on spiritual values*

Write your own list before looking at your partner's and writing your 'agreed list'.

My list

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Our agreed list

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

3. Write down an area of conflict regarding parenting. Each write down any possible solutions you can think of. Then put your agreed solution for now.

For example:

Issue	Possible solutions	Agreed solution for now
<p><i>How to balance work and raising children – should both parents work outside home?</i></p>	<p><i>One parent works part-time</i></p> <p><i>One parent works from home</i></p> <p><i>Mother stays at home with children until they go to school</i></p> <p><i>Father stays at home with children</i></p>	<p><i>Mother stays at home with children until they go to school and then returns to work</i></p>

Issue	Possible solutions	Agreed solution for now

Appendix 2

Creating a budget



(see also *The Marriage Book*, Appendix 3: 'Working out a budget')

Money management tips from CAP:

Create a budget

Agree a budget together and stick to it. It might sound simple, but this is the easiest way to keep track of how much money you have and exactly what you're spending it on.

Save, save, save!

Even if you can only afford to save a small amount each month, eventually it all adds up. Having a savings pot you can dip into when facing unexpected costs could be a lifesaver. What about planning ahead for specific things like Christmas?

Do your research

If you've been with the same supplier for over a year, the chances are you're paying more than you need to for energy. By researching the different options available, you can find the cheapest deal that suits your individual needs.

Pay with cash

Pay with cash instead of card. By handing over physical money, you can stay aware of what you're buying. This also means that when the money's gone, it's gone, which might make you think twice about that thing you 'really need'.

If you want to find out more about Christians Against Poverty, visit us at capuk.org.
To book on to a CAP Money Course in your area visit capmoneycourse.org.

Monthly Budget Planner

Work out your 'Actual' (or 'Estimated') income and expenditure. Then complete the 'Budget' column to help you work out adjustments you want or need to make.

Income	Annual figure	Monthly figures	
	Actual	Actual	
Joint salaries	\$..... ÷ 12	\$.....	
Other sources of income	\$..... ÷ 12	\$.....	
	TOTAL	\$..... (1)	
Fixed regular expenditure	Annual	Actual	Budget
Rent/mortgage	\$..... ÷ 12	\$.....	\$.....
Council tax	\$..... ÷ 12	\$.....	\$.....
Services (gas, electricity, water, etc.)	\$..... ÷ 12	\$.....	\$.....
Insurance	\$..... ÷ 12	\$.....	\$.....
Loan repayment(s)	\$..... ÷ 12	\$.....	\$.....
Travel – season ticket(s)	\$..... ÷ 12	\$.....	\$.....
Car(s) – tax, insurance, service	\$..... ÷ 12	\$.....	\$.....
Charitable giving	\$..... ÷ 12	\$.....	\$.....
Other	TOTAL	\$..... (2)	\$.....
Flexible 'essential' expenditure	Actual (estimated)	Actual (estimated)	Budget
Household (food, chemist etc.)	\$..... ÷ 12	\$.....	\$.....
Clothes / shoes	\$..... ÷ 12	\$.....	\$.....
Car running costs	\$..... ÷ 12	\$.....	\$.....
Phones	\$..... ÷ 12	\$.....	\$.....
Other	\$..... ÷ 12	\$.....	\$.....
	TOTAL	\$..... (3)	\$.....
Flexible non-essential expenditure	Actual (estimated)	Actual (estimated)	Budget
Entertainment / hospitality	\$..... ÷ 12	\$.....	\$.....
Presents	\$..... ÷ 12	\$.....	\$.....
Sport / leisure	\$..... ÷ 12	\$.....	\$.....
	TOTAL	\$..... (4)	\$.....
	Actual	Actual	Budget
Monthly sum for savings/emergencies	TOTAL	\$..... (5)	\$.....
Add together total monthly expenditure (2, 3, 4, 5)		\$.....	\$.....
Compare to total monthly income (1)		\$.....	

Appendix 3

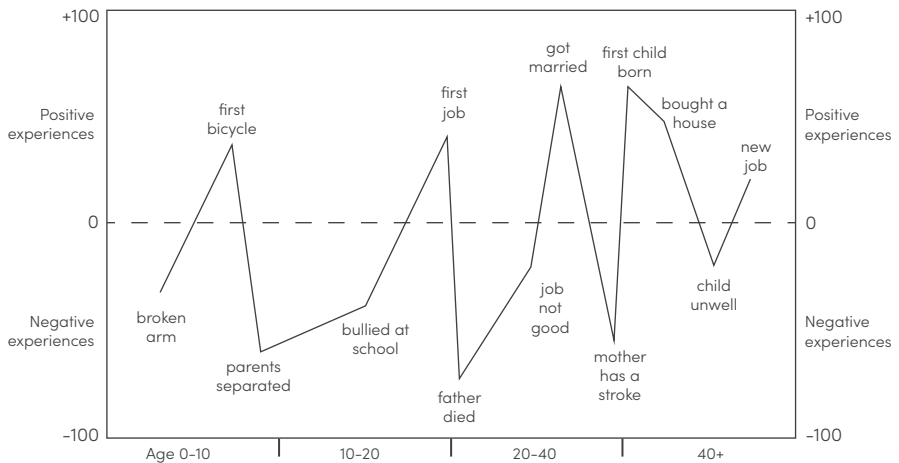
Building healthy relationships with our wider families



A. Being aware of our past

Spend 10 minutes filling in your 'Life Graph' overleaf (example below).

- record the most significant events that come to mind
- put positive experiences above the 'neutral line', between 0 and +100
- put negative experiences below the 'neutral line', between 0 and -100
- show your partner what you have put
- tell your partner what you felt then and what you feel now about these events
- where one of you has been hurt by others during your upbringing, check that you are both going through the steps for 'Healing childhood pain' (page 86)



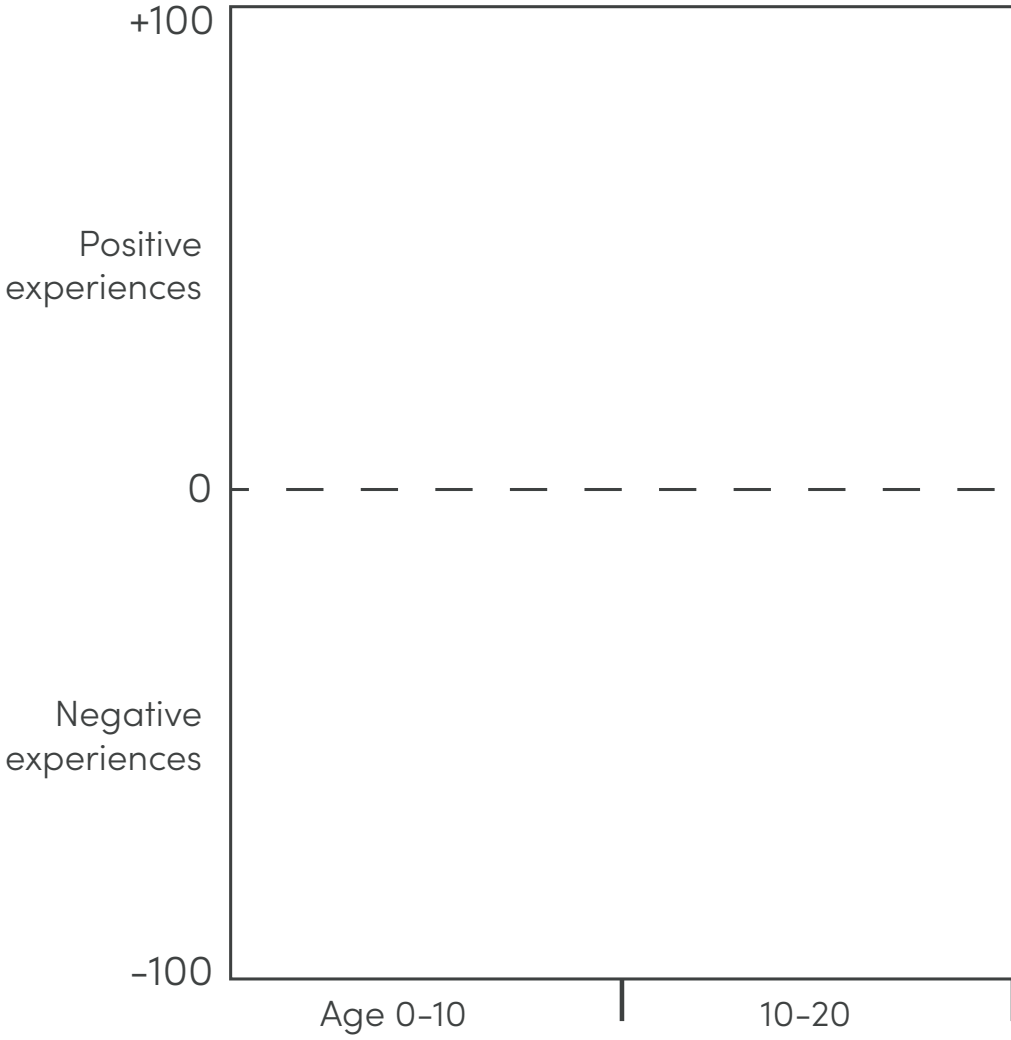
B. Maintaining healthy boundaries

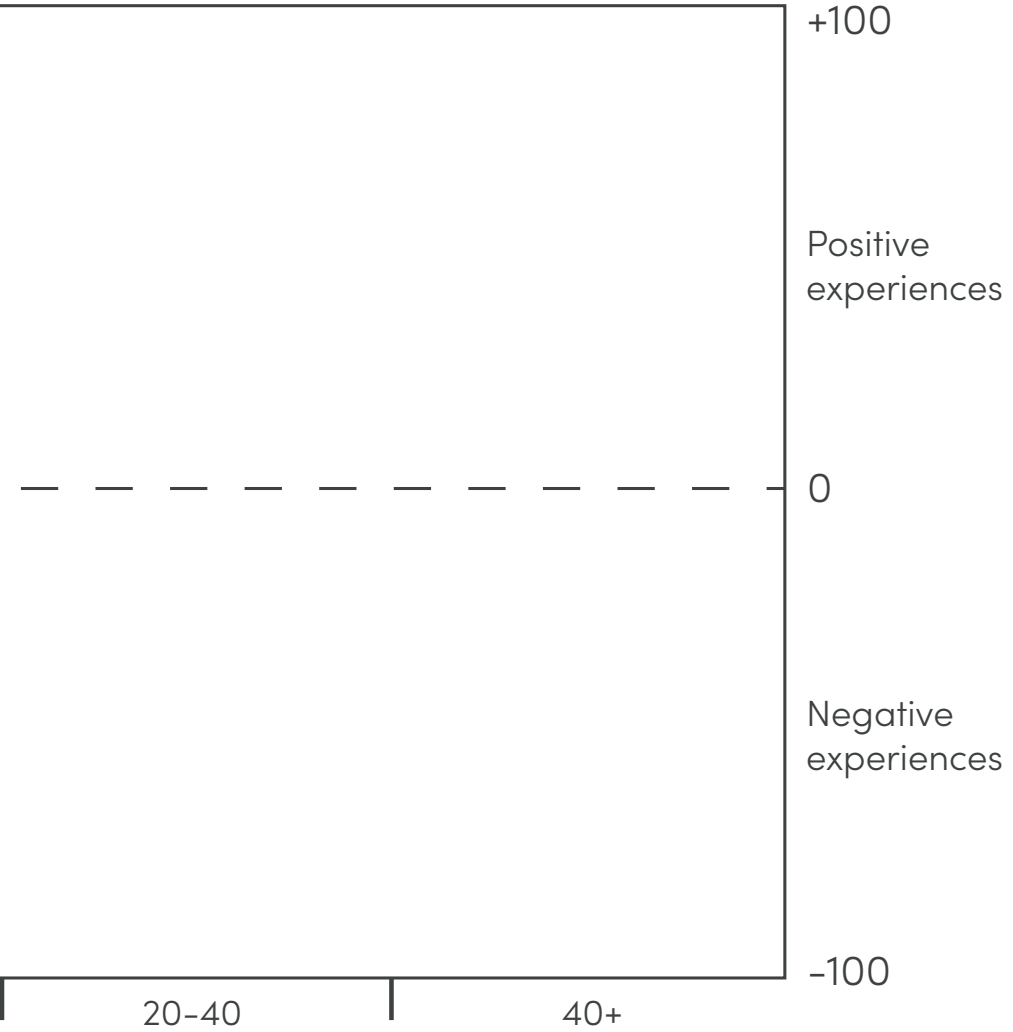
Each of you should fill in the following questions on your own, and then exchange your answers. Please consider carefully what your partner has written. Discuss the significant issues – pay particular attention to an issue that your partner has highlighted and you have not. You may need to adjust some of your own answers as a result.

1. Do your parents (seek to) control or interfere in your decisions and the direction of your lives? If so, specify the ways.
2. Have you ever noticed an unhealthy emotional dependence between you and a parent, or your partner and a parent? If so, in what way?
3. Are there issues relating to your parents (in-law) that cause tension or arguments between you?
For example: *'There is often tension between us when I have spent a long time on the phone with one of my parents.'*
4. In what way could you support your partner with regard to your parents and in-laws?
5. In what way could your partner support you with regard to your parents and in-laws?
6. Do you or your partner have unmet childhood needs?
 - a) If so, how could you help your partner?

 - b) How could your partner help you?

Life Graph





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For further resources and support or if you are interested in running this course visit **www.themarriagecourse.org** or email **info@themarriagecourse.org**

If you are interested in finding out more about the Christian faith and would like to be put in touch with your nearest Alpha, visit **www.alpha.org**



This journal is designed to be used in conjunction with The Marriage Course film series.

The series of seven sessions is designed to help any couple strengthen their relationship. The course covers: Strengthening Connection, The Art of Communication, Resolving Conflict, The Power of Forgiveness, The Impact of Family, Good Sex and Love in Action.

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