

Welcome, Introduction, and Feelings – *about 110:15 63:15*
Outline & Mentality - Common Protestant Outline
Adapted for the Restore, Rekindle, Renew Enrichment
(3RE CHANGES IN BOLD ITALIC CAPS)

Objective

To welcome the couples and to put them at ease; to familiarize them with the facility; to introduce them to the difference between thoughts and feelings; to help them see why sharing feelings is important; to encourage them to participate fully in the Worldwide Marriage Encounter experience and to be fully open with each other.

Goals of this presentation

To know

- they are welcome
- they are here to focus on their relationship
- the difference between communicating thoughts and feelings
- that communicating feelings is a necessary part of building close and intimate relationships
- that feelings are neither right nor wrong
- how to share feelings

To do

- decide to focus on each other and put distractions aside
- identify the ways they most often communicate
- begin to write their feelings in their Workbooks

To experience

- a sense of hope for their relationship
- a sense of openness by sharing at a feeling level
- a sample of a couple's dialogue

Flow of the presentation

We open with a warm welcome, followed by details about the facility and the Marriage Encounter experience. Then we go into a written exercise to help them focus on each other and begin using the Workbooks. We try to get them in touch with why they might be sitting here tonight. We direct them to another written exercise to help free them of distractions, motivate them for what is to come, and give a short written exercise designed to help them get in touch with expectations. After this minute exercise, the 3rd set Lay couple replaces the 2nd set Lay couple at the presenting table. We introduce feelings by sharing how we felt as we began our own Marriage Encounter experiences. We teach and clarify what feelings are by giving a definition and relatable examples, then direct the couples through some written exercises. Next, we illustrate how sharing feelings can enrich communication in our marriage, and we teach the dialogue technique using a sample dialogue. We further motivate the couples to communicate their feelings and conclude with some brief announcements. The dialogue question is intended to make them aware of their feelings and have them practice how to describe them.

Connection with other presentations

This is the first presentation. It sets the stage for the rest of the Marriage Encounter experience by introducing the idea of describing feelings, and it gives the couples a look at how we want them to communicate in dialogue throughout the time. ***A MOTIVATIONAL ENDING EXPLAINS DIALOGUE AT HOME, INTRODUCES TAKE-HOME QUESTIONS AND WEEKLY Q&A, AND INVITES EVERYONE TO FULL PARTICIPATION IN BETWEEN SESSIONS.***

Formation:

It is expected that this presentation will be presented by two different Lay couples and the Clergy couple. This helps to make it seem shorter. Part 1 is given by the 2nd set couple and Part 2 is given by the 3rd set couple.

It is important to understand that the way we start will determine the couples' perception of the Marriage Encounter experience as a whole. We want to start this presentation in a relaxed and friendly manner, thus inviting them to feel at ease and to begin the experience trusting us.

This presentation will also help them become aware of the difference between ordinary conversation and intimate communication in marriage and to understand that sharing our feelings is essential for intimate communication. Everything we do, think, or say is affected and shaped by our feelings. This presentation provides the basic building blocks for sharing feelings in dialogue and creates an awareness that communicating feelings is critical in revealing who we are as unique persons.

The presenters should be aware of the difference between ordinary conversation and intimate communication in marriage and understand and relate to the benefits of sharing feelings in their own relationships. This presentation, particularly the sample dialogue ***AND MOTIVATION AND TEASER SECTIONS***, should raise the interest level so the couples will want to hear more.

The sample dialogue reflection and the verbal sharing should model the dialogue process in a simple and non-threatening manner and encourage the couples to make the decision to share feelings with each other throughout the Marriage Encounter experience using the dialogue technique.

COUPLES WILL RECEIVE HANDOUTS AND HOMEWORK WHICH SHOULD TO BE ATTRACTIVE AND ENCOURAGING. PRESENTERS NEED TO BE ACCESSIBLE THROUGHOUT THE WEEK.

Part 1 – 2nd set couple (Total time: 23:05 24:20, includes 5/3)

Formation:

The presenters giving this presentation need to be open, friendly, and genuine in order to set the relaxed, confident tone we want for the flow of this particular Marriage Encounter experience. This is especially true of the first part. While feeling nervous is normal, both our words and our body language should demonstrate a natural warmth that shows we are glad the couples are here and that reassures them that they are in good hands. Like all of the presentations, this one must be written and workshopped, but the opening portion should not be read: it is to be given in a welcoming and friendly manner. The presentation should be presented clearly and accurately and not come across as demanding. We want to invite them to participate and accept the few disciplines but not force them to follow what may sound like restrictive rules and regulations.

I. Warm welcome and introduction (Total time: 3:40)

Clarification of how section I flows: Clergy begins part A and is followed by the Lay, also doing part A. Both give part A without reading. The Lay person then continues into part B (now reading) and is followed by CL or CS giving part B (also reading). The other Lay spouse then does part C. This flow serves to reduce the “ping-pong” effect.

I A. Thank & affirm them for coming (CL or CS: 0:20; LH or LW: 0:20)

The CL or CS introduces him/herself and spouse and warmly welcomes the couples. You may introduce yourselves either individually (“I’m Bob Johnson and this is my wife Suzie”) or as a couple (“We are Bob & Suzie Johnson”). Look at the couples and make eye contact as you welcome them – this must be genuine. Rehearse this to the point that you can simply talk to them without referring to your printed words. You want the couples to know that they are welcome just as if they are guests who have been invited into your own home.

LH or LW then introduces him/herself and spouse and also warmly welcomes the couples. Follow the welcome by introducing the other presenters. The same spouse then continues into part B.

Workshopper note: whichever spouse is most comfortable with giving a genuine, warm greeting to the couples should give this part (often one spouse will be more at ease speaking “off the paper”). This part should be written and workshopped, and then memorized. It must not be read! Workshopppers should listen to this part as it will be given (not read from the paper).

I B. Team explains their role (Lay who gave A: 0:30; CL: 0:30)

You begin reading the presentation at this point. Tell the couples why you and the other presenters are here; e.g., because we believe in marriage, although we facilitate this program we do not get paid, in fact we make experience everything right along with them. Tell them that you are not professional counselors, and that you will just be sharing your personal experiences with

them. Tell them that, because you are also not all professional speakers and have a definite time schedule, you will be reading your presentations.

The CL then explains his/her role here (as clergy, to represent the Church), besides being here for personal reasons.

I C. Nuts and bolts (Lay who did not give A and B: 2:00)

The Lay speaker who did not do the previous sections does this one. He/she should address all the necessary details (sections C 1-3) that are relevant and only repeat information from the check-in sheet that might affect the couples' experience if they did not read it. This should include items like snack table etiquette (if there is a snack table), name on the Workbook, etc. The list that is given here is not intended to be exclusive; it may be necessary to add one or two other items because of the local facility or some other unique situation. Although this is a list of bullet points, try to make it sound at least somewhat conversational. This section must be written and timed like the rest of the presentation.

The check-in sheet (prepared by the local area leadership) that the couples received when they arrived contains information ~~on maid service, keys, check out procedures, meals, Workbooks, (names on outside, using it to take notes, references inside, etc.)~~ Make sure that you BE are aware of ~~what is on the check-in sheet~~ so that what you say in this section complements it.

I C 1. Facility

Briefly cover the following points:

- Tell them that all presentations will be given here in this room.
- Cover any facility emergency procedures, including room exits and stairways, and a meeting site if fire evacuation is needed.
- **THEY EACH SHOULD HAVE BEEN SHOWN THEIR PRIVATE SPACE;** Give them the room numbers **OF THE PRIVATE SPACES** of the presenters if not on the check-in sheet.
- ~~Let them know we eat our meals as a group and will show them where tomorrow.~~
- Tell them to refer to the sheet they received when they checked in for information about ~~maid service, facility check-out procedures, and other~~ relevant points that are covered on the check-in sheet. If they have not looked it over yet, ask them to do so at the end of the evening.

I C 2. Marriage Encounter experience details

- Point out the location of the medical/personal hygiene box(es) and tell them that if they need anything, they can help themselves; if they need something not in the box(es), please ask one of the presenters.
- **ENCOURAGE THEM TO WEAR NAME TAGS AT ALL TIMES, AND TO LEAVE THEM BEHIND AS THEY LEAVE.**

- In a positive, non-demanding way, ask them to not ask questions or make comments to the presenters during the presentations, but rather ~~before the next one or at mealtimes~~ **DURING BREAKS, OR BY USING THE PROVIDED "QUESTION JAR" AND Q&A TIMES, WHICH WILL BE SCHEDULED FOR EVERY SESSION.** If applicable, suggest they refrain from visiting the snack table ~~until they return for the next presentation, as this helps with timing and focus~~ **DURING THE ACTUAL PRESENTATIONS**, and suggest they maintain a sort of “library silence,” to minimize distractions when moving through the building.

I C 3. Workbook

EVERYONE SHOULD HAVE RECEIVED A PEN AND 3RE BINDER FOR EACH SESSION'S HANDOUTS, ALONG WITH A NOTEBOOK FOR DIALOGUES IF NOT INCLUDED ELSEWHERE. Tell them to put their name on the outside so that it can be returned to them if misplaced. Pause and look at them expectantly so that they actually do it. You can model this by letting them see you writing your names on your own. Also tell them that their Workbook is theirs to keep and that no one but their spouse will see what they've written.

II. Why we (the couples) are here (A-D: CL and/or CS: 1:00)

II A. Make our marriage better

II B. Improve our communication

II C. Deepen our intimacy

II D. To be alone together, away from children and other distractions

Although you have only one minute to cover these points, personalize them where possible by referring back to your own original Marriage Encounter experience. Your sharing prepares the couples to answer the questions at the end of Part 1 by mentioning several reasons they may be attending their Marriage Encounter.

III. Communication exercise (Total time: 2:40)

III A. Exercise

III A 1. Transition (CL or CS: 0:15)

Introduce the exercise by asking the couples to shift gears from the hectic pace of home and work and to focus on each other during this time. This is just a transition statement and doesn't need any elaboration.

III A 2. Share “A quality of yours that I appreciate is....”
(LH & LW and CL & CS: 0:10 each)

Look at your spouse (don't read this) and tell him/her a quality of his/hers that you appreciate. This should be an inner personal characteristic or trait (e.g., kindness, patience, sense of humor, generosity) that is inherent in who he or she is as a person, not the most endearing quality at this particular moment. Make sure that this is not a behavior or action (taking care of the family, running an errand, telling a joke, cooking dinner).

Use the format, “Suzie, a quality of yours that I appreciate is your sense of humor.” Don't elaborate, just give the quality. Similar to the warm welcome that started this presentation, this must be written, but not read.

The point is to demonstrate what you mean by “a quality of yours that I appreciate,” since they will be doing the same in their written exercise in the Workbook. You want the couples to start thinking about their relationship.

III B. Ask couples to write a quality that they appreciate about their spouse in their Workbook (LH or LW: 0:45; instructions, 0:15, exercise, 0:30)

Tell them that you have just shared a quality of your spouse that you appreciate. Point out that it was an inner quality rather than something that they do. Then ask them to write a quality of their spouse that they appreciate on page _____. Give them about 0:30 to write.

III C. Ask couples to share what they have written with each other
(LH or LW: 0:30)

Tell them to briefly share what they have written with their spouse. This is not an open sharing; they are only to share with their spouse. Give them about 0:30.

III D. Wrap up: Why we did this exercise (CL or CS: 0:30)

Explain why we had them do this exercise. Points to include:

- to focus on each other
- to realize how infrequently we focus on qualities that we appreciate in one another
- to realize how infrequently we tell each other what we appreciate about the other

IV. Freeing self to experience the Marriage Encounter program

(Total time: 4:45)

IV A. Avoid distractions

IV A 1. Give guidelines (LH or LW: 1:30)

Introduce this section by telling them that you have some suggestions that could help them get the most from the time spent here. Present these as positive tips rather than rules. Also tell them why you are asking them to do them. Explain the benefit to their relationship by going along with these guidelines. Keep it positive and concise.

- Tell them that this is not meant to be a problem-solving workshop. Don't overemphasize the word "problem" here, but be clear that this is best held off until after the Marriage Encounter experience provides them with helpful communication tools.
- Invite them to make this a timeless event; they may even like to remove their watches, especially if they tend to "live by the clock."

"Timeless" means that the presenters will be keeping track of the schedule and calling them back to the conference room ~~before each presentation~~ rather than telling them what time to return. This gives them the freedom to focus on each other during their private sharing times without worrying about when to return. ~~However, presenters may be giving them wake-up times and asking them to take responsibility for being on time for the first event of each session. [In the case of retreat centers or other facilities that don't have alarm clocks or wake-up services, presenters will be responsible for ensuring the couples are awakened or present.]~~

- Ask them to trust that everything is fine back home. Also ask them to turn off their cell phones (or at least set them to vibrate) and to let go of texting and e-mail. Such non-communication can be threatening or distracting to today's audience, so you should also suggest that if they must check in with sitters or family members to do so only at **BREAKS** ~~the end of each evening~~. Remind them that this is a rare time to focus on each other.
- Tell them that this time is for each couple to work on their own relationship, so it would not be fair to others to distract them from their own experience by socializing. Encourage them to ignore normal social etiquette, and to focus only on each other and allow the other couples to do the same.
- ~~If it is relevant for the facility, ask them to leave the television off so they can stay focused on each other.~~
- Address any other local/facility distractions.

IV A 2. Don't compare with other experiences (CL or CS: 1:00)

Clergy asks couples not to compare this experience with others they may have attended, such as <<insert 2-3 current retreats or seminars they might have attended>>. They also should not compare it to Marriage Encounter experiences that their friends have attended. They and their relationship are unique, and their experience at this time will be unique as well. The only way to evaluate the experience is after they have finished it, especially as it is a “package” that builds with each presentation.

IV B. Presenters share what they have to let go of in order to be fully present here (LH & LW and CL & CS: 0:15 each)

Transition statement – suggested wording:

Like most of you, we have distractions or obstacles that we need to let go of in order to be able to fully experience this time. In my case...

Share some distractions or obstacles that you need to let go of in order to be able to fully experience this time; e.g., kids with sitter, aging parent, broken plumbing, job issues. Keep it simple: you don't need to provide background. Do not exceed the allotted time and avoid duplication.

IV C. Ask the couples to write down their obstacles and worries in their Workbooks (LH or LW: 1:15; instructions, 0:15; writing 0:45; exercise, 0:15)

Ask the couples to write down their distractions or obstacles in the appropriate place on page __. Have them fold that page over or cross out what is written to symbolically let go of their worries and obstacles and place them in God's hands. Allow 0:45 for writing and 0:15 to explain and do the “letting go” process.

Suggested wording:

We've told you some of the distractions or obstacles we have had to let go of in order to focus fully on each other. Now I'd like you to turn to page __ in your Workbook and write down the obstacles that you have to let go of in order to be able to focus on this Marriage Encounter program and your spouse; we're not going to ask you to share these with anybody.

<pause about 0:45>

Okay, now take your pen and cross out your entire list [or fold paper over - demonstrate]. Although this is only symbolic, we pray you can let go of these barriers and put them in God's hands. It's time to focus on what you're here to do.

V. Motivation (Total 2:00) (LH or LW and CL or CS: 1:00 each)

Share your personal hopes and dreams for them. Tell them what your Marriage Encounter experience has meant to you and how it has affected your relationship with each other, but don't make any promises about effects on their relationships. Be passionate. Strongly encourage them to make the decision now to get into the experience for the sake of their relationship. This should be the primary focus of this section. Before writing this section, it is important to get in touch with how you felt at the end of your experience and how you feel about the impact it has had on your relationship.

VI. Questions (Total time: 9:00)
(CL or CS: instructions, 1:00; writing, 5:00; reading and discussion, 3:00)

Why did I come here? What do I hope to gain? (5:00)

Direct the couples to the questions on page ___ of the Workbook and read through the questions once. Let the couples know they will have a few minutes to do the exercise in-place, without telling them exactly how many minutes. After 5 minutes, have them share their answers with their spouse. After the reading/discussion this time, Lay might say something like "Go ahead and wrap that up. We're just going to change seats with ___ and ___ for the second half of this presentation."

Part 2 – 3rd set Lay couple (TOTAL TIME: 77:10 38:55)

In this part of the presentation you introduce feelings and the importance that sharing them has in any intimate relationship. You connect with Part 1 when you share your own feelings as you began your Marriage Encounter experience, linking to the exercise that they just finished.

VII. Transition from Part 1 into Feelings (LH or LW: 0:30)

Suggested wording:

Good evening. The presenters have been talking about WHY we're here; now let's shift our focus to the foundation of this Marriage Encounter experience: Communicating our Feelings. We're going to explain the importance of recognizing and sharing your feelings with each other, then show you a way you can enrich your marriage by using a communication process we call dialogue.

VIII. Our feelings as we began our Marriage Encounter experience

(Total time: 2:00, LH & LW and CL & CS: 0:30 each)

Share what you wrote and also what you were afraid to write in answer to the question “Why did I come here and what do I hope to gain?” at the beginning of your Marriage Encounter experience. Did you hold something back because you thought your spouse wouldn't like it? Share how you felt when you were sitting where they are.

Revealing some of your answers helps to establish a rapport with the couples. They know that you experienced some of the same feelings they have as they begin. You may not have time to share everything you wrote, so focus on the things that will be most relatable. You have only 0:30 total, so be careful to focus on the important points.

First person starts with a transition statement.

Suggested wording:

We're going to start by sharing with you some of what each of us wrote when we answered the questions you just did. I wrote"

IX. Feelings introduction (Total time: 13:55)

IX A. Definition of feelings (LH or LW: 0:10)

Read as is:

We will be talking a lot about feelings these next days. On this Marriage Encounter experience, when we use the word “feeling” we mean “a spontaneous inner reaction to a person, place, or situation.” This definition is on page ___ of your Workbook.

Lay spouse who reads this statement continues into part B 1.

IX B. Give three simple and relatable examples of each of the following feelings (3:30 total for all presenters)

For each of the feelings give 3 relatable examples. Each example should use a short, simple description of the feeling (compare it to a touch, taste, color, sound, physical reaction, past experience, nature scene or image) and should include at least one 1-10 intensity rating as well. Present the three different intensities in order of increasing intensity. Vary the types of descriptions used in order to model different ways to describe feelings.

Formation:

We give real and relatable examples to illustrate three specific degrees of intensity for each of the feelings listed – happy, sad, afraid, and angry. We have 0:45 to share on each feeling, so we need to be clear and concise as we teach the couples that feelings with the same name can mean something entirely different depending on the situation and the resulting intensity. This is very important, because having feelings with differing degrees of intensity is one of the reasons we ask them to spend 10 minutes describing the strongest feeling in their written reflection. The point here is to make it clear why just naming a feeling as “happy” isn’t enough to describe it adequately.

We need to describe all three intensities of the feeling within the allowed 0:45. If we fall into the trap of telling stories, we can take away from the simple examples needed to clearly differentiate the various intensities of each feeling. Through our sharing, the couples should recall some of their own experiences that evoke similar feelings. This section helps to set up the feelings exercise that follows in Section D.

When describing the feelings, don’t use a modifier (like really, very, extremely, less) before the feeling word (happy, sad, etc.). The description that follows should convey the degree of the feeling. For instance, don’t say “A time when I felt very happy ...”; let your description do the job of conveying “very” instead.

The following is an **example** of describing angry feelings:

“An example of a time I felt angry was the morning after a heavy rain when I discovered that I’d left some tools out in the back yard all night. The feeling was a blush red kind of color and I could just kick myself for being so careless.”

“A time when my angry feeling was more intense was when a manager told some of my co-workers about a bad decision I’d made. My angry feeling was hot like an orange-yellow flame.”

“I had an angry feeling that was even more intense when another driver nearly forced my car off the freeway one night. My family was in the car at the time and my anger was a 10 on a 10-point scale and was bubbling over like lava from a volcano.”

IX B 1. Happy (LH or LW who gave A: 1:00)

Start with the following transition statement:

Suggested wording:

We've found that all feelings can have varying degrees of intensity and can be described in ways that show these differences. For instance, a time when I felt happy was....

IX B 2. Sad (LH or LW who did not just speak: 0:45)

IX B 3. Afraid (CL or CS: 0:45)

IX B 4. Angry (CL or CS who did not just speak: 1:00 including wrap-up)

NOTE:

Examples of “angry” should not progress into rage. Wrap this section up with a statement like:

Suggested wording:

We've described these feelings for you to show how the same feeling word can have different meanings for different people or at different times. That is why we will be asking you to describe your feelings in detail.

IX C. Explain the difference between thoughts and feelings

(LH or LW: 2:45)

IX C 1. Difference between thoughts and feelings

Explain the difference between intellectual thoughts and emotional feelings using the following suggested text or something similar:

Suggested wording:

Intimate communication is the lifeblood of a love relationship and the guarantee for continued growth in that relationship. There are basically two types of communication: communicating thoughts and communicating feelings. Thoughts include judgments, opinions, beliefs, ideas, concepts, and perceptions. Thoughts generally provide information about who, what, when, where, and why in a situation.

Feelings, on the other hand, arise spontaneously as a response to all of the above. Two people can share the same thought but have very different feelings about that thought.

For example, two people can share the same thought, “I think it will rain today.” If you are a farmer, you might feel happy as you think about the crops in your field. But if you are on your way to a picnic, you might feel disappointed or sad. The point is, sharing our feelings tells us more about each other than simply sharing thoughts. Most people share thoughts and ideas readily, but not many share feelings.

IX C 2. Explain the “I think vs. I feel” test

Use the following to explain the difference between thoughts and feelings.

Read as is, as much as practical for your style:

There is a simple test you can use to determine whether you are expressing a thought or a feeling in a statement. It’s called the “I think vs. I feel” test. If you can substitute “I think” for “I feel” in a sentence and it still makes sense, you have expressed a thought, not a feeling. For example, if I say “I feel we should go to the mountains for our vacation,” I’ve actually expressed a thought about where we should go for our vacation. The statement still makes sense if I say “I think we should go to the mountains for our vacation.”

A common misuse of the word “feel” is in expressions such as “I feel that something needs to be done.” This is the same as saying “I think that something needs to be done.” The phrase “feel that” usually introduces a thought or a judgment, not a feeling.

When I express my feelings, I say, “I feel excited, angry, frustrated, or happy” because I’m expressing an emotion I feel inside. If you can substitute “I am” for “I feel” then it’s a feeling. You may wish to refer to the examples on page ___ in your Workbook for help in telling the difference between thoughts and feelings.”

IX D. Feelings exercise, in place

(CL or CS: 2:30; instructions, 0:30; writing, 1:00, name feeling, 0:30; sharing, 0:30)

IX D 1. Recall a situation when you have had a strong feeling, an inner reaction. In one or two sentences describe the situation in writing.

Introduce the exercise with suggested wording:

Please turn to page ___ in your Workbook. We would like you to recall a situation when you have had a strong feeling, an inner reaction.

<<Pause>>

Now, describe the situation by writing about it in one or two sentences on the lines provided in the Workbook.

<Pause 1:00>

IX D 2. Name the feeling you experienced at the time of the situation and write it in your Workbook where it says, “I felt....”

Tell the couples to identify (name) the feeling they experienced at the time of the situation they’ve just described in their Workbook and write that feeling in the appropriate place.

Suggested wording:

Now, name the feeling that you experienced at the time of the situation by writing it where it says: “I felt....”

<Pause 0:30>

IX D 3. Tell the couples to read what the other wrote

<Pause 0:30>

IX E. Communication example, thoughts vs. feelings (Total time: 1:45)

LH or LW gives an example of thoughts vs. feelings.

IX E 1. One spouse describes a situation using thoughts, no feelings (LH or LW: 0:45)

Be sure to include a transition statement.

Suggested wording:

We are now going to give an example in order to illustrate the difference between thoughts and feelings.

Then describe a situation (that you both experienced together) using thoughts – no feelings! This should be similar to the situation called for in the Feelings Exercise IX D. In addition to basic information about what happened and to whom, you might include details such as the questions racing through your mind, background information, or even your opinions or judgments about the situation. This is brief, so be careful to exclude irrelevant data. Speak in a conversational tone; don't just rattle off a list of facts.

IX E 2. Other spouse describes the same situation, but using feelings instead of thoughts (Other Lay spouse: 0:45)

Give your perspective of the same situation in the same conversational style, but describe the situation primarily using feelings. Describe your feelings, name 3 or 4 feelings you experienced. You may include a few descriptions of your feelings, as you might do in casual conversation. For example, “I felt fear like when the kids do not meet curfew,” or “I became angry and had to ‘bite my tongue’ to not say something inappropriate.” You would not describe your feelings on the 10-point scale, or say that your angry feeling tastes or smells a certain way, as these tools have not taught this yet. Keep your sharing conversational as in IX E 1., but focus on your feelings and not on thoughts.

IX E 3. Clergy points out the difference (CL or CS: 0:15)

CL or CS completes this section by pointing out the difference between the two types of descriptions (thoughts vs. feelings).

IX F. Common misunderstandings about feelings (Total time: 3:15)

IX F 1. Feelings are unimportant (LW: 0:45)

Begin by making the statement:

Read as is:

In our society there are a lot of misunderstandings about feelings. One of those misunderstandings is that feelings are unimportant.

Give several examples of how you came to believe that feelings are unimportant. Some possible ideas:

- As a child you were told to stop feeling a certain way.
- You were told not to make decisions based on feelings.
- You were told, “I don’t care how you feel, do it anyway.”
- In your job you were told that only the bottom line was important, not your feelings.

Then explain that feelings are important. Give a specific example of how you found this to be true.

IX F 2. “Real men” don’t have tender feelings (LH: 0:45)

Point out that this is also a common misunderstanding. Then give at least two examples to counter this misunderstanding. Be sure to use examples that will evoke tender feelings, like watching your child sleep, or reading a love note your wife emailed you at work. Tell them that although men may often hide them, they do have tender feelings.

IX F 3. Some feelings are wrong or bad (CL or CS: 1:00)

Teach the concept of “feelings are neither right nor wrong” – but point out that our behaviors can be right or wrong. Give clear examples. You can use feelings like anger, sadness, grief, etc. to make your point.

IX F 4. Others are to blame for my feelings

(CL or CS who did not do 3 above: 0:45)

Give several short examples of this misunderstanding, such as “you make me feel ...” or “it’s your fault I’m” Clarify that, while feelings may be triggered by events, things, or people, they come from within us. No one is to blame for my feelings, they are mine. Feelings are a spontaneous inner reaction to a person, place, or situation.

X. Identifying and sharing our feelings enriches our communication
(Total time: 2:00)

X A. What are the results when I share my feelings with my spouse?
(LH: 1:00)

LH gives a short transition statement indicating that sharing feelings is beneficial and then backs it up by stating the points below and briefly personalizing them.

X A 1. I know myself better

X A 2. There is more to me than my brain

X A 3. We gain a better understanding of each other

X A 4. There is greater closeness in our marriage

X B. What are the results when I don't share? (LW: 1:00)

Teach the following points by giving short examples of what happens when you don't share your feelings with your husband. When listing inappropriate behaviors in point 2, be specific. An example of an inappropriate behavior might be "When I bottle up my feelings, it's easy for me to become critical and impatient with my husband."

X B 1. Misunderstandings

X B 2. Unshared feelings result in inappropriate behavior

X B 3. It puts a wedge between us

XI. Introduce and briefly teach dialogue process (Total time: 15:15)

XI A. Introduce (LH or LW: 0:30)

Read as is:

We've discovered something that has made a big difference in our relationship. We call it "dialogue." Dialogue can have several different meanings, but when we say "dialogue" on a Marriage Encounter experience, we mean: the sharing of our feelings with each other by first writing them down, the written part of the dialogue; then talking about our feelings, the verbal part of the dialogue.

XI B. Teach steps (LH or LW [1-6]: 3:30; CL or CS [7]: 1:00)

Teach the steps of dialogue from experience, illustrating that this is the way WE do it, rather than reading a list of rules or directions. When teaching the different ways to describe feelings in

Step 4 below, make sure to cover a variety of types of examples – smell, taste, color, intensity – even if you do not use every one of these elements in your own daily dialogue. You do this because people absorb information in different ways and you want to provide as many examples for them as you can. The more options you can give the couples to describe their feelings, the more you can help them communicate their feelings in meaningful ways. Illustrating the steps with your own examples shows the couples exactly what you want them to do. Make sure that the steps are the same as listed in the Workbook. Use inclusive language: “we/our” rather than “you/your.”

XI B 1. At the end of each presentation we will give a question about our relationship, and we will separate to write.

Tell them that we will separate to write, one staying in the conference room and the other going to their room, and that you will let them know whose turn it is to stay.

XI B 2. First answer the question in 2 or 3 sentences sharing just thoughts. Then, reflecting on the answer, we get in touch with our feeling(s) about the question.

Be sure that it is clear that we write only a few sentences (no more than 3) on thoughts.

XI B 3. Name the feeling(s) and write it/them down.

Refer couples to page ____ in the Workbook for the starter list of feeling words.

XI B 4. Describe your strongest feeling in writing.

Tell them to identify the strongest feeling and describe it. Suggest that their strongest feeling may be the one they are most aware of as they begin to write. Refer them to page ____ for suggestions on how to describe their feelings both now and throughout the Marriage Encounter experience. Illustrate several (4 or 5) of the ways to describe feelings, 1-2 sentences each.

Suggested wording:

Page ____ of the Workbook has examples of various ways to describe feelings. For example...

- *You can rank the intensity of your feeling on a scale of 1 to 10, like “My anger is strong, at least a 9 on a scale of 1-10.”*
- *Or you can compare your feeling to a taste: “I feel bitter about it, like the taste of unsweetened chocolate.”*
- *You can also associate your feeling with the sense of touch: “I feel cozy inside, like climbing between warm flannel sheets on a chilly night.”*
- *Or your feeling might suggest a color or a nature image, like “My sad feeling is gray like a gloomy winter day.”*
- *Another way might be to include your physical reaction, a mental image, or a shared experience. For example, “I feel peaceful, like when we fell asleep in each other’s arms listening to the surf right outside our window on our anniversary getaway.”*

XI B 5. Next, we will exchange what we have written in the privacy of our room and read twice what our spouse wrote to us.

Tell them how you will let them know that the writing time is over. They will then join their spouse in their room and exchange their writings. Tell them to read what their spouse wrote twice, the first time for the head (to focus on the words) and the second time for the heart (to focus on the feeling and the person behind the words).

XI B 6. Pick the strongest feeling from the two reflections and help each other to clarify the feeling.

Explain what you want the couples to do during the verbal dialogue. We choose the strongest feeling from the two written personal reflections. Point out that even though both spouses' feelings are important, we focus only on the feeling that is the strongest. The feeling chosen could be based on which feeling has the strongest intensity from 1-10 or which feeling description in the written reflections seems the strongest.

Once we have agreed on the strongest feeling, we work together to clarify the feeling. Both spouses need to be active participants in this. Explain how one describes the feeling further, while the other tries to listen well, asking questions to get in touch with the feeling, and giving examples of times when they might have experienced that feeling.

Refer them to page ___ in the Workbook where there are examples of questions they could ask in the verbal dialogue. Use an example like one of the following:

Suggested wording:

Once you've read each other's reflection, you should both agree on whose feeling is stronger based on the descriptions in the reflections. We spend the rest of our dialogue time trying to fully experience that feeling.

As an analogy, imagine that you are a web designer trying to build a web page based on your spouse's description. You put in a banner and add some text and graphics, each time asking if this is what was meant, adjusting the page content until it's as close as possible. In dialogue, our goal should be to reflect that feeling back to our spouse based entirely on his or her descriptions. Information on page ___ can help us ask questions and more fully describe our feelings.

OR try this analogy for the second paragraph:

One way to illustrate this concept is to imagine you are trying to explain to a contractor what you want your new kitchen to look like. Based on what you tell him, he will sketch out what he's heard. After looking at his picture, together you will refine the plan. You would tell him you want the window bigger, more cupboards, a skylight, etc. He would ask for more details about size and placement. Eventually you would agree that you both have a better sense of what you

want your kitchen to look like. In dialogue, rather than drawing a picture like the contractor, your goal is to reflect the feeling back to your spouse based entirely on his or her description. Again, information on page ___ can help us ask questions and more fully describe our feelings.

XI B 7. Importance of writing (CL or CS: 1:00)

Tell the couples why writing is so important. If they aren't accustomed to writing, they will need to be convinced that this is important. We rarely take time during a typical day to reflect on our thoughts and feelings without being interrupted. It is through writing that we are able to get in touch with our feelings. Much of their experience depends on the couples writing their thoughts and feelings, so you must be convincing and persuasive in describing the purpose and importance of writing – and of writing for the full time.

Encourage the couples to write for the full time, and not to leave the conference room until the writing time is complete. The “hot pen” technique is one way to keep their pen moving, even when they have run out of things to say. Tell them they can just write “I love you” or “I can't think of anything else to say” a few times and they will be surprised how quickly they do think of something else to write.

XI C. Sample dialogue on: “What is my strongest feeling as we begin this Marriage Encounter experience?” (LH & LW: 8:00)

Begin by telling the participants that you wrote your reflection on the question: "What is my strongest feeling as we begin this Marriage Encounter experience?" Keep this dialogue simple, relatable, and positive; don't go longer than 8 minutes. Put some fun into it.

Tell them that reading your personal reflections aloud to each other is not the usual way to dialogue – that you normally exchange your written reflections and then read them silently twice – but you are reading the reflections out loud this time to model how the written reflection is the basis for the verbal dialogue to follow.

Because you are modeling something that they have never experienced before, some “narration” at various transition points in the dialogue is appropriate. Transition points and sample narrative have been included below to guide you.

Suggested wording before reading your reflections to each other:

We don't usually read our reflections out loud to each other, but for demonstration purposes now we will. Normally we exchange what we've written and read silently what the other has written; twice, of course – once for the head and once for the heart.

This is not meant to be a deep personal sharing. The written reflection is in answer to the question “What is my strongest feeling as we begin this Marriage Encounter experience?” Note that it is about THIS event, not your original experience. Each of you in turn reads your reflection out loud. Be sure to use feelings in your reflection, identifying one feeling and

thoroughly describing it. It is important at this point to use a feeling that is easy to describe in several relatable ways.

Suggested wording after you've read your reflections to each other:

Now that we've heard our reflections, we need to agree on whose feeling is strongest.

Turn and face each other for the verbal portion of the dialogue. This portion of the presentation is NOT to be read. It must be written and workshopped. It should be presented from memory. You may use notes on 3 x 5 cards, but it is to be shared as if the couples were witnessing an actual dialogue in your own home.

Using a normal conversational style, refer to the descriptions in the written reflections as you decide whose feeling will be the focus of the verbal dialogue. The decision should be easy for the couples to see, based on the reflections they've just heard. Simply saying "I think we should dialogue on your feeling because it's stronger," followed by "I agree" is not a good model for deciding on the strongest feeling. It should be clear from your discussion why you've chosen the feeling that you will be exploring in your dialogue.

Suggested wording after you've decided which feeling to focus on:

Okay, we've agreed that (Suzie)'s feeling is the strongest feeling from our reflections. Now we begin the final part of the dialogue process. In this part, I will be trying to paint in the details of (Suzie)'s feeling so that I can actually experience what (she) is feeling, and (Suzie) will help me by describing (her) feeling as best (she) can.

The verbal dialogue must be workshopped, and it must describe only your feelings, not your thoughts and judgments. Model active listening and non-verbals as you draw out and attempt to experience your spouse's feeling. Use several of the types of descriptions from the Workbook in the verbal exchange. Your spouse should confirm whether your description is on target.

Plan and prepare for this section by writing and practicing the verbal portion beforehand to make it seem natural. Either write out the verbal dialogue or jot down descriptive examples to follow during the verbal part of the sample dialogue. It's okay if the couples see you glance at your paper. Do not stray from the written and workshopped material. In the verbal dialogue share only about the strongest feeling; there should be no discussion or problem solving. This is NOT a live dialogue, but you want it to look similar to what you are asking them to do in their room. The verbal portion should be about 3-4 minutes of interplay, describing the feeling in as many ways as possible. Avoid having so many exchanges that it sounds like a game of 20 questions. Each question should relate somewhat to the previous response so that the listeners aren't scratching their heads wondering where that question came from. The list of questions for verbal dialogue found on page ___ can be used to draw out the feeling.

The correct way to end the sample dialogue is for the spouse whose feeling is being described to tell the other – "Yes, I think you are experiencing my feeling." **DO NOT LEAVE OUT THIS STEP!**

Welcome, Introduction, and Feelings
Outline & Mentality – CPO - 3RE

Suggested wording after successfully experiencing the feeling through the dialogue process: *Since it was (Suzie)'s feeling, it was up to (her) to determine when I "got it." It took a few exchanges, but once (she) thought that I was experiencing (her) feeling (she) told me – I didn't tell (her).*

The timing includes introducing the dialogue, reading the reflections and the verbal dialogue. You will be modeling what they have just heard in Section B, 5 through 7.

The sample dialogue focuses on your feelings about beginning this particular Marriage Encounter experience. In this sample dialogue – and in ALL dialogues modeled – avoid phrases that might muddy the word “feel” for them, like “I feel like” (without adding a feeling) – or “that makes me feel” (implying that somebody else is to blame for my feeling). Instead of saying “I feel like a king,” change it to “I feel powerful like a king.”

- The sample dialogue is a written, workshopped dialogue that adheres strictly to the given time constraints while modeling to the couples the mutual collaboration involved in the dialogue process. The purpose is to teach the couples how to dialogue in a meaningful way. Demonstrate how you identify and describe feelings in a written “reflection” and then verbally describe those feelings in further examples to each other. You want them to be drawn into dialogue by your example, so it is important to use a feeling that is easy to describe in many relatable ways. It is also important that this first exposure to dialogue be positive and upbeat.
- The entire sample must be written and workshopped. This must never be an impromptu “live” dialogue, no matter how experienced the couple. Consistency and clarity in the dialogue technique are needed during this dialogue and all the dialogues that are modeled . If you stray from correct technique, the dialogue can get off focus and mistakenly teach discussion rather than the sharing of feelings.
- This is also NOT a love letter and must not contain any of the things you will be adding to their writings at the end of Marriage in Today's World.
- The sample dialogue does not have to be rewritten each time it is presented, but it must represent the writing couple's current situation. There is no expectation that the sample dialogue reflect “where the couple is” as they are beginning this event. Like all presentations, the sample dialogue will need to be updated as the couple's circumstances change. When it does get rewritten, it must be re-workshopped. The interplay should be representative of a real (but workshopped) scenario.
- A microphone should be used for the sample dialogue whenever possible. When you turn to one another to speak, your voices might not project to the back row of seats. You also need to be aware that when you share feelings, your voices may drop so that they can't be heard by everyone in the room. It is also normal for people to speak more rapidly than usual when they are nervous. Be aware of this so you don't let this happen. It might be a good idea to have a subtle signal you can use to let your spouse know that he/she is speaking too fast.

XI D. Clergy wraps up the sample dialogue (CL or CS: 0:45)

Wrap up the sample dialogue by pointing out how it followed the format that was explained earlier.

Suggested wording:

Did you notice that (Bob & Suzie) wrote only a few sentences on the subject of the dialogue? Most of the written reflection was spent describing the strongest feeling that arose from the subject, not the subject itself. After they read each other's reflections, they took a moment to agree upon who had the strongest feeling, then they spent the entire verbal part of the dialogue working to describe that feeling, as we say, in full and loving detail. There was some back-and-forth in the verbal dialogue while they tried to sharpen the image of the feeling for one another so that each was experiencing the same feeling. They also used several different ways of describing feelings.

The dialogue ended when (Suzie), who had the strongest feeling, told (Bob) that she thought he was experiencing her feeling.

XI E. Give helpful suggestions for dialogue (CL or CS: 1:30)

Taking the couples to the page, go over the dialogue tips in the same order that they are in the Workbook and explain where needed (i.e., "garbage dumping" means bringing up old hurts and dumping them on our spouse). It will be helpful to refer back in a general way to the sample dialogue that they just witnessed. Do not refer to these as dialogue "pitfalls."

- Ignore grammar or spelling mistakes, they are not important.
- Don't bring up old hurts and "dump" them on your spouse. ("Garbage dumping")
- "Why" and "because" don't belong in your dialogue; there is no need to justify your feelings.
- Keep the focus on your feelings by giving "I" messages instead of "You" messages.
- Avoid blaming the other for your feelings or behaviors; i.e., "you made me..." or "you didn't..."
- Whatever your spouse writes has value no matter how much is written.
- Avoid making critical judgments.
- Allow your spouse to share without interruption.
- Don't expect your spouse to change simply because you shared your feelings.
- Spend your full time together continuing to draw out the chosen feeling.

Wrap this up by telling them why following these tips is a "Good Thing."

Suggested wording:

By following these suggestions in your dialogue, you can deepen the level of intimacy in your communication.

XII. Motivation to share feelings (Total time: 2:00)

XII A. Remember dating and early marriage and all that you talked about. It can be as good as that, even better (LH or LW: 0:45)

Give personal testimony of how, when you share feelings, you are able to communicate on a level of intimacy similar to your dating and early marriage experiences. Then turn the focus to the couples and urge them to share their feelings with each other in dialogue in order to deepen the intimacy in their own relationships.

Prior to writing this section, evaluate how your communication has changed since you began sharing with each other on a feelings level. Is there a new freedom in realizing that feelings are neither right nor wrong? Has this brought back your intimacy and rekindled your hopes and dreams? Do you feel safer now to share your feelings completely?

Your answers to these types of questions will provide the insight and motivation needed to give powerful personal testimony about the level of intimacy in your communication. This sharing should motivate the couples to share their feelings and communicate in dialogue.

XII B. What we are going to share with you may make it possible to expand, enhance, enrich, or deepen your marriage (CL or CS: 0:45)

Remind the couples that feelings are the foundation of all intimate communication. Discussions, decisions, lovemaking, and even arguing include feelings; they are part of nearly every interaction we have with our spouse and others. In sharing feelings, we reach a deeper level of understanding and, as a consequence, our relationship is enriched.

XII C. Clergy provides further motivation (CL: 0:30)

Sharing at a feeling level is a way for all of us to move from our head to our heart. It is especially powerful for the couples to hear you share your feelings and to hear your personal testimony about the effect sharing feelings has had on you, as well as on your calling as clergy and your relationship with the people of God. If you only talk about feelings, but don't actually share your feelings, you limit your opportunity to influence the couples to embrace dialogue. Further motivate the couples by sharing your personal experience and observations of other couples sharing feelings.

XIII. Wrap-up and Dialogue questions (CL or CS: 1:30 3:15 & 20:00 DIALOGUE)

XIII A. Wrap up should include:

~~(Obviously, such details will need to be changed for non-residential Marriage Encounters and formats other than conventional Weekends.)~~

XIII A 1. Flow of the Marriage Encounter experience

~~Briefly remind them how the rest of the program will flow: Presentation, Question, Written Reflection, Dialogue. This should be a brief, concise explanation.~~

XIII A 2. Procedure to call them back to the conference room

~~Tell them how you will call them back after each presentation beginning tomorrow. (Procedures may vary among the Faith Expressions.) Tell them you will not be calling them back tonight.~~

XIII A 3. Wake-up procedure

~~Tomorrow begins with brief time of devotions. Unless there are no alarm clocks at the facility, and it has no wake-up service, you expect them to be responsible for their own wake-up routine so they can be on time, so clearly state the time the devotional time begins. For facilities that don't have alarm clocks/wake-up service, explain the wake-up procedure. Tell them that we will go to breakfast immediately following the devotions.~~

XIII A 4. Any other relevant announcements

~~Remind couples to read the Welcome/Check-in sheet if they haven't already done so.~~

XIII B. Worship details and closing prayer (CL and/or CS: 1:30)

XIII A. Read (and teach) the questions (CL or CS: 1:00)

XIII A 1. What qualities do I appreciate most about you? How do I feel as I write this to you? Describe the feelings in full detail.

XIII A 2. What qualities do I appreciate most about us? How do I feel as I write this to you? Describe the feelings in full detail.

Read the questions as they appear on page __ of the Workbook.

Teach the questions by giving some examples of what qualities one might appreciate about their spouse. The qualities should be inner qualities that are part of what defines their spouse as a unique person, rather than talents, skills, or things that they do. Also, remind them of the sample dialogue they have just witnessed – focusing on the strongest feeling, describing it by using the five senses, shared experiences, 1-10 scale, etc.

XIII B. EXPLAIN THE PROCESS OF MOVING TO THEIR PRIVATE SPACE AND BEING CALLED BACK

Tell them that the husbands will stay in the conference room to write **WHILE THE WIVES GO TO THEIR ASSIGNED PRIVATE SPACE. EXPLAIN THE CALL BACK PROCESS.**

Writing time: 10 minutes DIALOGUE TIME: 10 MINUTES
Husbands stay in the conference room to write (recommended).

At the end of the writing time, remind the husbands that they are meant to share what they have written with their wives, ~~and that they will not be called back to the conference m tonight. Bid goodnight with a reminder that devotions start at _____~~ **AND HOW THEY WILL BE CALLED BACK TO THE CONFERENCE ROOM.**

XIV. MOTIVATION TO DIALOGUE AT HOME AND RETURN FOR NEXT SESSION (WRAP UP) (LH & LW: TOTAL TIME: 15:00)

XIV A. REVIEW SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL HOME DIALOGUE

- **W.E.D.S. TECHNIQUE**
- **PRIME TIME**
- **ELIMINATE DISTRACTIONS**
- **CHOOSING QUESTIONS (WE PROVIDE A HANDFUL EACH WEEK BUT ENCOURAGE THEM TO TRY IT MORE OFTEN)**
- **SET A TIMER SO THEY AIM TO WRITE FOR AT LEAST 10 MINUTES BUT VERBALLY DIALOGUE FOR A MAXIMUM OF 10**
- **QUICK REVIEW OF IMPORTANCE OF WRITING**
- **HOW THEY MIGHT DIALOGUE EVEN IF APART.**

XIV B. FEED BACK

ENCOURAGE THE COUPLES TO ENGAGE THE PRESENTERS IN BETWEEN SESSION WITH QUESTIONS, CONCERNS, ETC. PROVIDE AS MUCH CONTACT INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE TO THEM IN PRINT. EXPLAIN WHAT THEY ARE TO DO IF THEY FIND OUT THEY CANNOT ATTEND THE NEXT SESSION. IF BUDDY COUPLES, SMALL GROUPS ON FACEBOOK, ETC. ARE TO BE USED, NOW IS THE TIME TO EXPLAIN ALL THIS. STRONGLY ENCOURAGE THEM TO MISS NO SESSIONS.

XIV C. TAKE-HOME DIALOGUE QUESTION ACRONYMS

EXPLAIN THE USUAL ACRONYMS THAT WILL BE IN THE TAKE-HOME DIALOGUES. THESE SHOULD ALSO BE PRINTED FOR THEIR REFERENCE.

XIV D. Q & A (10:00)

THIS IS THE ALL-IMPORTANT Q&A SESION, WHICH WILL BECOME A FIXTURE, SO EXPLAIN THE PROCESS:

- **WE WILL TAKE 10 MINUTES NOW FOR ANY QUESTIONS YOU HAVE ABOUT WHAT YOU HAVE HEARD TODAY, ABOUT THE DIALOGUE PROCESS, OR ABOUT EXPECTATIONS THIS WEEK.**

- ***AFTER THE Q&A TIME, ENCOURAGE THE COUPLES TO WRITE DOWN OTHER QUESTIONS FOR THE QUESTION JAR WHEN THEY RETURN, OR TO CALL ONE OF THE PRESENTERS, OR ASK THEM DURING THE NEXT Q&A.***

XIV E. MISSION POSSIBLE

HAND OUT AND EXPLAIN THE PDA, WHICH IS A SORT OF STRETCHING EXERCISE TO PREPARE FOR THE NEXT LEG OF AN EXCITING JOURNEY. IT'S NOT MEANT TO BE A BURDEN, BUT FUN AND INVIGORATING.

PRAY - EACH WEEK WE WILL ASSIST YOU TO GRADUALLY DEVELOP YOUR COUPLE PRAYER.

DIALOGUE - EACH WEEK WE WILL PROVIDE YOU WITH A FEW TAKE HOME DIALOGUE QUESTIONS THAT BRING TO LIFE THE CONCEPTS YOU WILL HEAR IN THE PRESENTATIONS.

ACT - ACTION TO REKINDLE YOUR ROMANCE.

EXPLAIN STEP 1 ON COUPLE PRAYER: TO SIMPLY PRAY AS INDIVIDUALS SILENTLY FOR ONE MINUTE, SITTING SIDE BY SIDE.

<i>XV. TEASER FOR NEXT SESSION: (CL AND/OR CS: TOTAL TIME: 5:00)</i>

AS AN OPTION, YOU MIGHT ADD A SONG HERE, SUCH AS STEVE AND ANNIE CHAPMAN'S "INCOMPATIBILITY" OR REFER TO THE BOOK MEN ARE FROM MARS, WOMEN ARE FROM VENUS. MENTION THAT THE NEXT SESSION FOCUSES ON OUR PERSONALITY STYLE AND BEHAVIORS, AND ON WHAT WE CAN CHANGE AND WHAT WE CANNOT. TONIGHT AND THE PDA WILL PROVIDE THEM WITH A GREAT FOUNDATION FOR NEXT TIME AS WE EXPLORE WHAT "MAKES US TICK" AND WHAT "TICKS US OFF." THIS IS THE STRETCHING AND CONDITIONING AS WE SET OUT ON A NEW JOURNEY.

CLOSE WITH PRAYER AND INSTRUCTIONS (ARE THEY ABLE TO LEAVE RIGHT AWAY, COLLECT THEIR CHILDREN, ARE THEY INVITED STAY FOR SNACKS, ETC.?).

How we live out the concepts of this presentation:

As Worldwide Marriage Encounter presenting teams and married couples, we are called to live what we profess— 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. This does not mean being perfect! We must remember that we present much more than our presentations. We present our relationship with each other and with the Body of Christ, the Church. We have a responsibility to be authentic in what we present, which means we practice what we preach by living and loving as we say we do, rather than just teaching ideals.

As presenters, we strive to accept our own feelings and those of our spouse in our daily life, not just in our daily dialogue. If we live the concept that feelings are neither right nor wrong, we will neither reject nor simply tolerate our spouse's feelings. We will accept their feelings all the time, just as we do in our dialogue.

When we commit to communicate with our spouse on a feeling level, it's also important to strive to break through the "3-minute barrier" in our daily dialogue. Although this is not something we teach the couples, the "3-minute barrier" is a term we should all be familiar with.

The "3-minute barrier" refers to the approximate amount of time it takes in our dialogue to understand the feeling on an intellectual level (in our head) rather than to experience our spouse's feeling on an emotional level (in our heart).

Why is that a barrier? We don't really know our spouse as deeply as we think we do and breaking through that 3-minute barrier requires us to fully invest ourselves in trying to experience our spouse's feeling. As we collaborate together to break through this time barrier in our dialogue, our trust in one another will grow and we will begin to move beyond our fear of not being accepted or loved and begin to find true intimacy with our spouse.

An assessment for us as a couple:

- Do we continually strive to be the best couple we can be?
- Do we affirm our spouse's qualities every day?
- Is our relationship the best it can be when we present a Marriage Encounter experience?
- Does our relationship appear real and genuine in every setting? At home, at work, at church, at social gatherings – as well as on a Marriage Encounter?
- Do we have a real yearning in our hearts for those couples to have a true conversion of heart on their Marriage Encounters?
- Do we communicate on a feeling level both in and out of our daily dialogue?
- Do we really believe that feelings are neither right nor wrong?
- Do I take responsibility for my own feelings?
- Do we strive to break through the 3-minute barrier in order to really “experience” our spouse's feeling rather than just settling for an intellectual understanding of the feeling?

Our “yes” to these questions is why couples begin to trust us and make a decision to fully involve themselves in a powerful Marriage Encounter experience.

Questions for verbal dialogue:

These are questions to enhance your verbal dialogue by making it richer and more meaningful. It is not necessary to use every question during any given verbal dialogue. Sometimes three or four may be adequate; at other times, particularly when striving to break through the 3-minute barrier, more may be necessary to fully experience your spouse's feeling.

- Can you tell me more about your feeling?
- Have there been other times when you felt this way?
- Is this feeling like _____? (Give an example of what you think the feeling might be like.)
- Is it like the time when we _____? (Give a shared experience when you think you both felt that way.)
- Are there any strong physical sensations you experience when you feel this way?
- What color do you think of when you experience this feeling?
- What do you picture in your mind when you feel this way?
- What sounds remind you of this feeling?
- What do you want to do when you experience this feeling?
- What do you want to say when you experience this feeling?
- Are there other feelings that go along with the one you are describing to me?
- On a scale of 1-10, how strong is your feeling?
- What taste would describe your feeling?
- Is there a situation, event, or nature scene that comes to your mind that would describe your feeling?

Dialogue questions to help the presenters develop their presentations:

HDIF? How do I feel?
HDIFA? HDIF about?
HDIFAT? HDIFA this (or that)?
HDIFAMA? HDIFA my answer?

1. HDIFA greeting the couples coming on this Marriage Encounter experience?
2. HDIF when someone gives me a list of rules to follow?
3. What qualities in my spouse do I really appreciate? HDIFAMA?
4. How much is being in touch with my feelings a part of my life? HDIFAMA?
5. Why do I write love letters to you? HDIFAMA?
6. Why did I say “yes” and go on our Marriage Encounter experience? HDIFAMA?
7. Recall a specific time that I was glad to read your love letter twice. HDIFAMA?
8. Before our Marriage Encounter experience, did I easily share my feelings with you?
HDIFAMA?
9. What was my initial reaction to the statement that feelings are a spontaneous inner reaction to a person, place or situation? HDIFAT?
10. Do I often say “I feel that” and express a thought rather than a feeling? HDIFAT?
11. Am I the type of person who shares from my head or from my heart? HDIFAMA?
12. Do I believe that feelings are important? HDIFAMA?
13. Do I believe that “real men” have tender feelings”? HDIFAMA?
14. Do I believe feelings are neither right nor wrong? HDIFAMA?
15. Is describing my feelings to you in a letter easy to do? HDIFAMA?
16. Is it hard for me to follow any of the dialogue tips? HDIFAMA?

This is a sample of a check-in sheet to be given to couples as they arrive at the facility. Local area leadership will need to modify this list for each event and provide the presenters with spares for the head table at the beginning of the program.

Hello, and welcome to your <<Faith Expression name>> Marriage Encounter experience!

Please read through the items on this sheet before the first presentation.

- The first presentation begins at _____. Please come to the conference room by ____ in order to get settled in before the presentation begins.
- Restrooms are located _____
- You have received 2 room keys. Each spouse should keep one because you will be returning to your room separately throughout the time. (**ASSUMING PRIVATE SPACES LOCK**)
- ~~The hotel has extended check out time until the end of the Marriage Encounter on _____. To check out _____.~~
- ~~There will be no maid service. The reason for this is that you will be using your room at various times throughout our time together, and we want to ensure that you are not interrupted. If you need more towels, toilet paper, or any other room accessory, _____~~
- There is no smoking in the conference room or in any part of the **FACILITY** not specifically designated a smoking area.
- ~~You will be eating your meals as a group.~~
- Please don't leave purses or other valuables in the conference room when you leave ~~at the end of each presentation.~~
- Please wear your name tag throughout our time together so that the presenters can get to know who you are ~~and the hotel staff will know that you are part of this group~~ **BUT DO LEAVE THEM BEHIND FOR THE NEXT SESSION.**
- This is a couple experience, so please sit as a couple. We also encourage you to try different seats for each presentation. (If you do need to sit in a particular location, just let the presenters know and they will try to accommodate your needs.)
- Each of you will be provided a Workbook before the first presentation begins. Please write your name on the cover so that it can be easily returned to you if it gets misplaced. You may find it helpful to take notes in it as the program progresses. It holds many useful references as well.
- The names and room numbers of the presenters are _____ & _____
_____ (Room ____); _____ & _____ (Room ____);
_____ & _____ (Room ____); & _____ & _____
_____ (Room ____)
- In the case of an emergency fire evacuation, the group rendezvous point will be outside at _____
- Supply Table....
- Snacks....