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# LUTHERAN MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER

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LOVE ONE ANOTHER, AS I HAVE LOVED YOU

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JOHN 15:12

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ROOM NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

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# ***Welcome, Introduction, and Feelings***

**Welcome to  
Worldwide Marriage Encounter!**

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**Welcome, Introduction, and Feelings**

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## What is a Worldwide Marriage Encounter experience?

Worldwide Marriage Encounter provides experiences designed to help married couples communicate more intimately with each other in order to deepen and enrich their relationship.

### Exercise

A quality of yours that I appreciate is:

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### Ways to free yourself to better experience what the Marriage Encounter program has to offer:

- This is not a problem-solving workshop; it's to strengthen your relationship.
- Let the presenters focus on the schedule so you can focus on your relationship.
- Resist the temptation to stay connected with the world outside of this Marriage Encounter experience. Take advantage of this time to make a stronger connection with your spouse instead!
- Respect the privacy of other couples and let them focus on their own relationships.
- Avoid comparing this to other retreats or seminars you have attended or what someone may have told you about their Marriage Encounter experience. Your experience will be unique because of who you are and the circumstances of your lives right now.
- Be open to what you hear and what you learn about each other; don't let expectations get in the way.

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## Welcome, Introduction, and Feelings

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**What obstacles and distractions do I have to put aside in order to fully participate in this Marriage Encounter program and focus fully on my spouse?**

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**Welcome, Introduction, and Feelings**

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## Talking about feelings is the foundation of intimate communication

Definition:

A feeling is a spontaneous inner reaction to a person, place or situation.

### The difference between thoughts and feelings

- Thoughts include judgments, opinions, beliefs, ideas, concepts, and perceptions.
- Feelings are spontaneous inner reactions.

### “I Think” vs. “I Feel” tests

1. If you can replace “I feel” with “I think” in a sentence then you have expressed a THOUGHT, not a feeling.

Example: “I feel that this is unfair.” This is the same as... “I think that this is unfair.” *This is a THOUGHT!*

Note that the phrase “I feel that” never expresses a feeling. It almost always expresses a THOUGHT or judgment.

2. If you replace “I feel” with “I think” and the statement doesn’t make sense, you have probably expressed a FEELING.

Example: “I feel excited about this.” It doesn’t make sense if you say... “I think excited about this.” *This is a FEELING!*

3. If you can replace “I feel” with “I am” you have probably expressed a FEELING.

Example: “I feel pleased with the outcome.” This has the same meaning as... “I am pleased with the outcome.” *This is a FEELING!*

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## Welcome, Introduction, and Feelings

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## Exercise

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

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2. Identify and name the feeling at the time of the situation. I felt...

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## Common misunderstandings about feelings

1. Misunderstanding: Feelings are unimportant.  
Fact: Feelings are important!
2. Misunderstanding: "Real men" don't have tender feelings.  
Fact: Real men do have tender feelings!
3. Misunderstanding: Some feelings are wrong or bad.  
Fact: Feelings are neither right nor wrong. There is no morality to feelings. It is what you do when you have the feelings that can be right or wrong.
4. Misunderstanding: Others are to blame for my feelings.  
Fact: No one is to blame for my feelings. They are spontaneous inner reactions; they come from inside me. Similarly, I am not to blame for having certain feelings.

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## Welcome, Introduction, and Feelings

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## Dialogue

Definition: Dialogue is the sharing of our feelings with each other, first by writing our feelings and then by talking about our feelings.

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## The Process

1. You will be given a question about you or your relationship and then you will separate to write your reflections.
2. Write the answer to the question in two or three sentences sharing your thoughts. Then, reflecting on your answer, identify your feelings.
3. Name your feeling(s) and then write it/them down.
4. Choose the feeling that seems most intense (or strongest) to you and describe it in writing. Be as detailed as you can be.
5. Exchange what you have written with your spouse. Read what your 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 feelings and the person behind the words).
6. Choose the strongest feeling from the two reflections and help each other to clarify and experience the feeling. Make sure that one spouse doesn't do all the talking. Take turns listening and talking.

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## Welcome, Introduction, and Feelings

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## DEFINITION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR DESCRIBING FEELINGS

A feeling is a spontaneous inner reaction to a person, place or situation. Feelings are neither right nor wrong. They have no morality attached to them. Morality only enters in when the feeling is acted upon.

1. Name the feeling
2. Describe the feeling using the word “like” and a description of the feeling. You may want to use some of the following characteristics.

Category	Ways to describe the feeling	Example
Intensity	rate feeling on a scale of 1 to 10	My feeling is a 10!
Taste	sour, sweet, bitter, spicy	My feeling tastes sour like a lemon.
Touch	scratchy, soft, prickly, smooth	My feeling is soft like silk.
Smell	sweet, smoky, fresh, pungent	My feeling smells sweet, like cinnamon rolls baking in the oven.
Color	red, blue, yellow, green, etc	If my angry feeling were a color, it would be bright red.
Sound	high pitched; screech; wail of a siren; crack of thunder	It sounds like birds singing on a spring morning.
Physical reaction or sensation	sick, chilled, giggling, sobbing	It’s a sick feeling, like having an upset stomach.
Similar past experience	childbirth, riding a bike, first date, new home	My feeling is excited, like the time our child took her first steps.
Nature scene	beautiful sunset, crashing waves, still forest	My joyful feeling is like watching an amazing sunset at sea.
An image	hitting a home run, decorating the Christmas tree, sitting around a campfire	I feel excited, like a kid who hit his first home run.

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## Welcome, Introduction, and Feelings

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## **Possible Questions for Verbal Dialogue**

*(These are suggested questions to help you get started on dialogue and to make it richer and more meaningful. You probably will not want to use more than a few of these during any given dialogue.)*

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 \_\_\_\_\_? (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?

On a scale of 1-10, how strong is your feeling?

If your feeling were sitting on the table, what would it be doing?

What taste would best describe your feeling?

Is there a smell you associate with this feeling?

Is there a picture or nature scene that comes to your mind that would describe your feeling?

If your feeling had a voice, what would it say? (A "relaxed" feeling might say "This is the life!" or an encouraged feeling might say "Go for it!")

If your feeling were an animal, what would it be? Describe the animal. (fierce like a lion, peaceful like a cat basking in the sun)

If your feeling were coming down the street, what would it look like?

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## **Welcome, Introduction, and Feelings**

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## Helpful suggestions for Dialogue

- Ignore grammar or spelling mistakes, they aren't important.
- Don't bring up old hurts or mistakes ("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 using "I" messages instead of "you" messages.
- Avoid blaming others for your feelings or behaviors (phrases like "You make me feel" or "I feel like this because you did/didn't do something").
- 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 talking about and continuing to draw out the feeling you decided to explore.

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## Welcome, Introduction, and Feelings

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**Questions:**

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

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

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**Welcome, Introduction, and Feelings**

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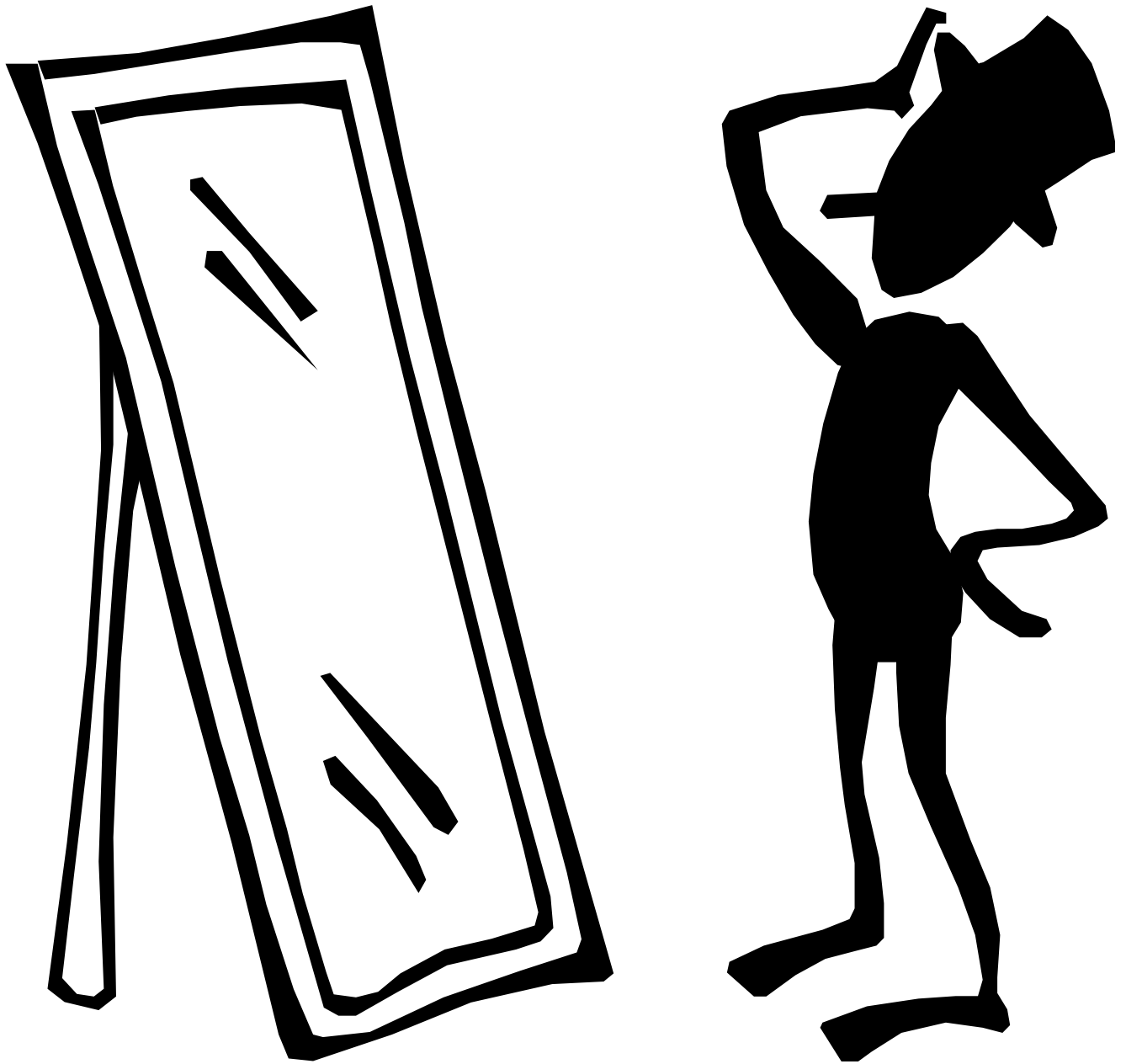
## FEELING WORDS STARTER LIST

<p><b>Happy</b>            alive            amazed            ambitious            appreciative            awesome            blessed            blissful            buoyant            cheerful            cherished            comfortable            confident            connected            content            delighted            eager            earnest            ecstatic            elated            empowered            encouraged            energized            enthusiastic            excited            exhilarated            expectant            free &amp; easy            frisky            glad            happy            high-spirited            honored            hopeful            inspired            jolly            joyful            jubilant            lighthearted            lively            lucky            motivated            optimistic            passionate            peaceful</p>	<p>perky            playful            pleased            pumped (-up)            reassured            satisfied            secure            sexy            spirited            supported            turned-on            uplifted            wonderful            zealous</p> <p><b>Sad</b>            ashamed            bummed            compassionate            crushed            deflated            dejected            depressed            despondent            disappointed            discontented            discouraged            disheartened            dismal            dismayed            distressed            downcast            dreadful            dreary            empty            gloomy            grumpy            heartbroken            heavy-hearted            hopeless            hurt            ill at ease            inconsolable</p>	<p>limp            lonely            melancholy            moody            mournful            out of sorts            pathetic            pitiful            remorseful            reserved            sad            sensitive            somber            sorrowful            sulky            sullen            unhappy</p> <p><b>Angry</b>            angry            annoyed            bitter            defensive            disgusted            enraged            exasperated            furious            impatient            incensed            indignant            irate            irritated            mad            oppressed            outraged            provoked            resentful            uneasy            vengeful</p>	<p><b>Afraid</b>            afraid            alarmed            anxious            appalled            apprehensive            challenged            concerned            confused            cowardly            desperate            distrustful            doubtful            fearful            foolish            frightened            frustrated            hesitant            horrified            hysterical            indecisive            insecure            isolated            lost            nervous            on-edge            panicky            petrified            perplexed            pressured            scared            shocked            skeptical            suspicious            terrified            threatened            timid            trapped            uncertain            upset            vulnerable            weak            worried</p>	<p><b>Other</b>            aloof            ambivalent            awkward            bold            brave            broken            certain            cold            complacent            committed            conflicted            courageous            curious            daring            determined            distant            embarrassed            fascinated            focused            fragmented            inquisitive            intrigued            mystified            nostalgic            numb            open            sassy            stupid            torn            twisted            united</p>
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## Welcome, Introduction, and Feelings

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## **ENCOUNTER WITH SELF**

***Understanding who I am and what I do  
– and how these affect my relationships***

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### **ENCOUNTER WITH SELF**

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## ***Personality Styles Assessment***

Each of us has our own personality that reflects who we are as unique individuals. Our personality is built from our history, our experiences, our faith, our attitudes, and even our behaviors. The foundation of our personality is our personality style, or temperament. Our personality style is with us from birth and is not something that will change. This temperament colors who we are and indicates our leanings, reflects our values and principles, and affects our relationships. There are four basic personality styles that we use in Worldwide Marriage Encounter in order to help us discover who we are. All of us have aspects of each; however, knowing our dominant personality style is helpful in developing empathy, understanding, acceptance, and trust in any relationship.

In this exercise, read the statements on the left and then write 1, 2, 3, or 4 in the boxes next to each of the four responses. A 1 indicates the response least like you, while 4 indicates the response most like you. Don't duplicate numbers along a row. If you look at the second statement in the example below, "the strongest value or principle for me," the person completing the assessment put a 4 next to "freedom," as that was most like him, and put a 1 next to "being correct," as that was least like him. Then the other boxes were filled in with a 2 and a 3 in the same way.

Remember, 4 is most like you; 1 is least like you.

### **For Example:**

Statement	Response 1		Response 2		Response 3		Response 4	
1. The personal qualities I am more aware of in myself are...	gentleness & warmth	4	strength and capability	2	consistency and clarity	3	spontaneity and creativity	1
2. The strongest value (principle) for me is...	relationship	3	responsibility	2	being correct	1	freedom	4
3. I am attracted to people who...	are cooperative and easy to get along with	2	are responsible and get things done	4	are thorough and think things through	3	are fun and unique	1
TOTALS	<b>H</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>6</b>

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## **ENCOUNTER WITH SELF**

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Statement	Response 1	Response 2	Response 3	Response 4
1. The personal qualities I am more aware of in myself are ...	gentleness and warmth	strength and capability	consistency and clarity	spontaneity and creativity
2. The strongest value (principle) for me is ...	relationship	responsibility	being correct	freedom
3. I am attracted to people who ...	are cooperative and easy to get along with	are responsible and get things done	are thorough and think things through	are fun and unique
4. I want others to see me as ...	warm and personable	reliable and effective	confident and logical	skillful and unique
5. When I am really down on myself, then I see myself as ...	having very little to offer	incapable of doing what is needed	confused and out of control	a loser
6. I tend to make decisions by ...	trusting my intuition	following the rules	careful analysis and consideration	my gut reaction
7. I get people to cooperate by ...	creating friendship and harmony with them	persuasion and direction	influence, discussion, and a logical approach	motivation and an outgoing creative style
8. I feel best about myself when I am ...	helping people feel good about themselves	getting things done	advising people and helping them work things through	making things happen
9. When someone criticizes me, it's likely that I will ...	withdraw and not deal with it	deal with it and defend myself	analyze the situation and others' motives	ignore it and move on
10. When I am under stress, I tend to ...	withdraw and compromise	redouble my efforts	discuss and analyze	challenge and confront
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>C</b>

*This Personality Styles Assessment was developed for Worldwide Marriage Encounter by volunteer professionals.*

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## ENCOUNTER WITH SELF

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## DESCRIPTION OF PERSONALITY STYLES

**H**ELPER: The Helper's prime value is to be in relationship with others. Helpers are people who need people and love to be involved with others. Generally they try to get in touch with others' feelings and are empathetic and intuitive. In relationships they are peacemakers and work to obtain cooperation, belonging and harmony. It is very important to the Helper to be seen as genuine and caring. Helpers generally tend to see the positive in situations. They are loyal, trusting, supportive, and more concerned with what could be than with what is.

**O**RGANIZER: The Organizer gets things done. Organizers tend to be very responsible, are almost always prepared, and follow the rules. They tend to make lists so they know when the job is done. If things are disorganized and lack structure they need to get them structured and organized. They tend to be perfectionists, reliable, stable, and sensible. In general they do not enjoy lots of change, preferring things to be predictable and orderly. They tend to look to the past for the basis of decisions, how has something been done before (tradition). Among their major gifts are their sense of order and follow-through. They will almost always do the work first and, if there is time, consider pleasure or play.

**T**HINKER: The Thinker enjoys ideas and wants to understand. Thinkers enjoy analyzing situations, tending to be the quiet observers. In general, Thinkers are independent and more involved with thoughts and ideas than with emotions. They will follow the rules -- if the rules make sense and are logical. The Thinker has a need to be competent and to accumulate knowledge. Thinkers enjoy debate and the discussion of ideas. Usually Thinkers tend to be perfectionists and have difficulty dealing with their own mistakes. They have a desire to be right. They are great planners, because they will work to consider all the options.

**C**ATALYST: The Catalyst enjoys being free, spontaneous, and playful. Catalysts are generally bold in their actions, enjoy being the center of attention, and are risk-takers. They are action-oriented and like to be involved with the here and now. They like making things happen. They enjoy competition and like variety. They get bored rather easily and will seek change just to make things interesting and exciting. They enjoy a challenge and tend to do things their way, often being seen as impulsive. They find rules and structure confining and are looked up to for their spontaneity and out-going nature.

**THESE ARE GENERAL DESCRIPTIONS AND MAY NOT DESCRIBE YOU FULLY. BECAUSE EACH OF US IS A BLEND OF ALL 4 PERSONALITY STYLES, YOU WILL PROBABLY HAVE SOME CHARACTERISTICS FROM ALL STYLES.**

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## ENCOUNTER WITH SELF

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## ***PERSONALITY STYLE***

My personality style reflects my identity, becoming more apparent from childhood through adulthood. It influences and is reflected in the things I say and do, including my perceptions and reactions to persons, places, and events around me. It encompasses my personal values, beliefs, goals, expectations, hopes, and fears.

## ***BEHAVIOR***

A behavior is what I do. A behavior is a learned and adaptable manner of presenting myself in an attempt to be in control, win approval, gain respect, receive affirmation or acceptance, or protect my self-esteem. My behaviors have been learned over a lifetime; but, unlike my personality style, they are subject to adaptation and change. They may be based on whether the setting is work, home, or play. Behaviors can be learned as well as unlearned.

## ***WHAT I CAN CHANGE***

Just as feelings are neither right nor wrong, neither is our personality style right nor wrong, nor is one style better than another. It is our behavior that can be right or wrong. Although there is a relationship between our personality style and the behaviors we choose, we should never excuse bad behavior by saying, “That’s just because I’m a Thinker” (or a Helper, a Catalyst, or an Organizer). I cannot change my personality style, but I definitely can change what I do. I am responsible for my behaviors.

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## **ENCOUNTER WITH SELF**

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## My dominant personality style (my temperament)

- What do I value?
- What do I seek?
- What affirms me?
- What brings me down?

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## My typical behaviors (what I do)

- Behaviors develop over a lifetime as a result of many factors, including environment, family interactions, work, and life experiences.

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## My behaviors can have positive and negative effects on my relationship with my spouse

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### ENCOUNTER WITH SELF

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## **ALDONZA**

from "Man of La Mancha"

### ***My Lady!***

I am not your lady. I am not any kind of a lady.

I was spawned in a ditch by a mother who left me there, naked and cold and too hungry to cry. I never blamed her, I'm sure she left hoping that I'd have the good sense to die.

Then, of course, there's my father. I'm told that young ladies can point to their fathers with maidenly pride. Mine was some regiment here for an hour. I can't even tell you which side.

So, of course, I became as befitted my delicate birth, the most casual bride of the murdering scum of the earth . . . .

### ***And still thou art my Lady!***

And still he torments me!

How should I be a lady? For a lady has modest and maidenly airs and a virtue I somehow suspect that I lack. It's hard to remember these maidenly airs in a stable laid flat on your back.

Won't you look at me, look at me. God, won't you look at me. Look at the kitchen-slut reeking of sweat, born on a dung heap to die on a dung heap, a strumpet men use and forget.

If you feel that you see me not quite at my virginal best, cross my palm with a coin and I'll willingly show you the rest . . . .

### ***Never deny thou art Dulcinea.***

Take the clouds from your eyes and see me as I really am.

You have shown me the sky, but what good is the sky to a creature who'll never do better than crawl? Of all the cruel devils who badgered and battered me, you are the cruellest of all!

Can't you see what your gentle insanities do to me? Rob me of anger and give me despair.

Blows and abuse I can take and give back again, tenderness I cannot bear. So don't reach out to me when your sweet 'Dulcinea' you call. I am only Aldonza. I'm no one, I'm nothing at all!

### ***Now and forever thou art my Lady Dulcinea.***

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## **ENCOUNTER WITH SELF**

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***There is a “me” I don’t want others to see***

If my spouse sees me with all my flaws, he or she may not consider me to be worthy of love and respect.



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***Self-doubts limit me and my relationships***

Hiding my self-doubts and the parts of me that I judge are unacceptable makes it all but impossible to have true intimacy with my spouse.

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***Attitudes of superiority also affect my relationships***

Superior attitudes stem from my judgment that I have certain qualities or traits or abilities that make me a better person than my spouse. These judgments have a negative impact on our relationship.

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**ENCOUNTER WITH SELF**

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## ***My reaction to compliments***

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## ***Using a double standard***

I often use a double standard. To accept a quality in myself, it must be present all the time; but it's easy for me to acknowledge a weakness, even though it shows up rarely. When it comes to other people, though, I'm quick to admire a quality in them even if I only see it occasionally.

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## ***God created me good, lovable, and unique***

### **Psalm 139: 1 - 4 & 13 - 14**

<sup>1</sup>*O Lord, you have searched me and known me. <sup>2</sup>You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. <sup>3</sup>You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. <sup>4</sup>Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely.*

<sup>13</sup>*For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. <sup>14</sup>I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.*

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## **ENCOUNTER WITH SELF**

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## *Choosing to believe in the “me” that God sees*

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## QUESTIONS

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***Note: Questions are for personal reflection only. There will be no exchange of books and no dialogue after this writing time.***

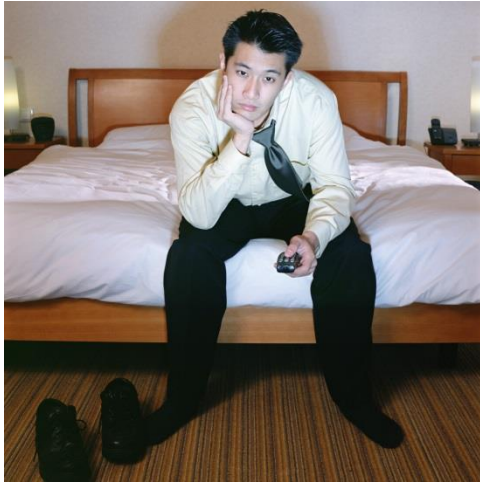
- 1. What do I like most about myself?**
- 2. What do I like least about myself?**
- 3. What is my dominant personality style?**
- 4. What is the way I try to present myself to others? Describe it briefly. How does it limit my relationships?**
- 5. What are my feelings about what I have written? Describe fully.**

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## ENCOUNTER WITH SELF

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# ***Marriage in Today's World***

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## **Marriage in Today's World**

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## **The World's Plan for our Marriage**

My expectations about marriage:

Who or what influenced my view of marriage as I was growing up?

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## **Exercise:**

What were my expectations of our life together when we married?

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## **Three Stages of Relationship**

- Romance
- Disillusionment
- Joy

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# **Marriage in Today's World**

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## **Romance - the first stage**

Romance is the stage when we focus on each other's positive qualities and behaviors.

### **Exercise:**

What attracted me to you?

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## **Disappointments**

- **Unmet expectations**
- **My attitudes**
  - "indifference"
  - "peace at any price"
  - "self protection"
  - "independence"
  - "me first"
  - "scorekeeping"
  - "superiority"
  - " \_\_\_\_\_ "

## **Married Singles**

The married singles lifestyle is thinking and acting in my marriage as if I was a single person. Living the married singles lifestyle inevitably leads to progressively deeper disillusionment.

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# **Marriage in Today's World**

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## **Disillusionment – the second stage**

A downward spiral occurs in a relationship when we don't experience the love and attention we expect. The distance between us grows.

A downward spiral that continues unchecked leads to the despair and deep loneliness we call the stage of disillusionment.

**"IS THIS ALL THERE IS???"**



## **Break Out of the Downward Spiral**

### **Make Daily Decisions to Love and to Be Loved**

Love is more than a spontaneous feeling that comes and goes.

To love or to be loved is a conscious decision to move out of the stage of disillusionment in our relationship.

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## **Marriage in Today's World**

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## Confronting for the Sake of Our Relationship

When we argue or disagree, one of the decisions to love may be to confront each other for the sake of our relationship. This can be positive if we face issues together. We call this constructive confrontation, and we have guidelines to help. Constructive confrontation can keep us open and honest and is life-giving for our relationship.

1. Your relationship is more important than any issue or situation. Keep your discussion focused on each other and not the issue. Confront for understanding, not to win.
2. Stay physically close, even though it may be difficult. A small gesture of affection can show caring. Eye contact also helps.
3. Don't bring in a third party. A parent, friend or co-worker has no part in your confrontation. Even comparisons like "You're just like your mother" fuel the fire.
4. Finish the discussion - do not walk away no matter how hard it is to stay. This can be difficult, especially when you are exasperated or want to avoid conflict. Tears are okay if they stem from vulnerability or frustration. Do not use tears as a weapon or to end confrontation. Be sensitive! If you cannot finish the discussion, make a commitment to come back to the issue later.
5. Avoid absolutes like "you always" or "you never." Absolutes are rarely true.
6. Do not waste time placing blame. It only drives a wedge between you. Move forward and do not waste time looking back.
7. Avoid name-calling and character assassination. Treat each other with respect and gentleness.
8. Avoid sarcasm and criticism. Both are hurtful and damage relationships.
9. Sometimes it's best to postpone the confrontation. For instance, one or both may be too tired, out of control, under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or looking for revenge.

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## Marriage in Today's World

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## **Joy - the third stage**

The result of making the decision to love or to be loved is reaching the stage of joy.

The stage of joy is more than experiencing joyful, happy feelings.

The stage of joy is defined as the mutual awareness that we are loved, cherished, honored, and respected for who we are, even with our flaws and imperfections.

## **Writing a Love Letter**

“Love Letter” refers to offering a true gift of love to our spouse in a letter by sharing our deepest feelings, no matter what they may be.

Write your love letters in a natural, loving, conversational way, as if you were speaking directly to your spouse.

Start your letter with a loving endearment, such as “Dear” or “Sweetheart.”

Do not worry about grammar or having to use the perfect word.

Focus on your strongest feeling and describe it as completely as you can.

Remember that feelings are spontaneous, inner reactions to a person, place or situation.

Accept how you feel without assigning blame, or justifying or rationalizing your feeling.

Be sure to keep your focus on your spouse as you write. It is easier to let your love come through.

Trust in the goodness of your spouse and in your love for each other

When reading your spouse’s love letter, accept it as a letter of love, too, and focus on trying to experience their feeling.

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## **Marriage in Today’s World**

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## SYMPTOMS OF DISILLUSIONMENT

### Instructions:

1. Review the list below and check all the symptoms that are now or have recently been a source of disillusionment in your marriage.
2. Note and write down the symptom which generates the strongest feelings.
3. Write your love letter, focusing on your feelings. Describe your strongest feeling as fully as you can. The love letter you write is about you and your feeling, and not about the symptom.

Check all that apply:

- Moodiness in our marriage
- Feelings of disillusionment, boredom, emptiness and loneliness in our relationship
- Indifference to each other's problems, interest, jobs
- Not enough affection and small courtesies between us
- Feelings of insecurity, jealousy
- A sense of being better understood by others than by my spouse
- Nagging
- Lack of planning things together
- A sense of being used
- More interest in position and money than me
- Taking each other for granted
- No excitement in our relationship
- Frequent quarrels
- Insults, rudeness, sarcasm, criticism
- Continuous escapes, together or alone, such as, TV, sports, socializing, liquor, hypochondria, etc.
- A desire to be right all the time
- Possessiveness of: my checkbook, my kitchen, my children, my body, my taste in the house, my friends, my time
- Being overly sensitive
- Irresponsibility: around the house, with the children, with money, with commitments
- Acting independently
- Closed to having (more) children
- Distance in our sexual relationship
- Being too controlling

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## Marriage in Today's World

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# LISTENING

*Listening involves all of me*

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LISTENING

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# The Ways We Limit Our Listening

Listening for facts only \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Preparing my answer \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Problem-solving \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Listening with my motor running \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Pacifying \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Impatience \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I've heard all this before \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Focusing only on the words \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Minimizing \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other listening patterns \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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## LISTENING

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## The Ways I Limit My Listening

**Instructions:** Please check off any and all listening patterns that limit how you listen in your relationship with each other.

- Listening for facts only: Listening for who, what, where and when, ignoring everything else; not concerned with the feelings that accompany the facts; focus is on my need for information
  - Preparing my answer: Forming my answer in my head while my spouse is speaking; focus is usually on defending, justifying or explaining my own position
  - Problem solving: Listening only to get enough information to fix the problem, with the sole intent of providing a solution; failing to realize that my spouse may need to vent or may only want to have someone listen
  - Listening with my motor running: Believing that I can listen to my spouse while doing other things at the same time; focus is on my own priorities or busyness; easily distracted
  - Pacifying: Trying to soothe or comfort my spouse through reassuring words such as “don’t worry” or “everything will be okay” in order to try to replace his or her feelings or perceptions with a more uplifting view; primary focus is maintaining harmony while avoiding potentially tense conversations on difficult issues
  - Impatience: Giving the other person the impression that I do not have time to listen and/or what they have to say is unimportant; often accompanied by non-verbal gestures such as fidgeting, foot-tapping, eye-rolling, heavy sighs, etc.; focus is on ending the conversation quickly so listener can concentrate on something else
  - I've heard this all before: Assuming that I have heard everything my spouse has to say on a particular topic and that there is nothing new to be communicated; tuning out the other person
  - Focusing only on the words: Taking certain words or phrases literally without listening to the entire message; failing to take other forms of communication into consideration, such as tone of voice, facial expressions, body language, etc.
  - Minimizing: Minimizing my spouse’s feeling by saying what I think he or she wants to hear; primary focus is to gain some peace and quiet and get the other person to stop talking
  - Other listening patterns (for example: being controlling, being judgmental or a know-it-all, assuming listening is the same as agreeing, being indifferent, multi-tasking, interrupting, finishing the other person’s sentence)
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## LISTENING

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## Listening with the heart

*Listening with the heart can bring new life to relationships. Listening with the heart means to make room in my heart beyond my own feelings and beyond what I understand with my head. I put my own thoughts and feelings aside and try to take in the thoughts and feelings of my spouse. I go beyond the words to meet the person who is trying to tell me something about himself/herself. Listening with the heart is empathetic listening that is other-centered. It requires the listener to be an active participant in the exchange, rather than a passive listener.*

### Elements of listening with the heart

1. Develop an attitude of openness in listening (avoid judgments or getting defensive)
2. Decide to listen (put aside listening obstacles and choose to be an active participant)
3. Involve the whole person (show interest through body language)
4. Be present to speaker (let them know they are being listened to)
5. Give feedback (ask questions, rephrase to clarify and check out the message)
6. Go beyond words and be aware of feelings (more than understanding with the head)
7. Be aware of the person behind the words (unspoken messages of “notice me,” “care about me,” “help me...”)
8. Notice non-verbal communication (tone of voice, eye contact, touch, physical reactions such as a reddened face, fidgeting, shrugging shoulders)
9. Listen for the sake of the other

### Notes

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## LISTENING

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## **PARABLE OF THE SOWER: MT. 13:3- 9, 13-15:**

And he told them many things in parables, saying: “Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had not depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil, and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen.”

“The reason I speak to them in parables is that ‘seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand.’ With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that says:

‘You shall indeed listen, but never understand,  
And you will indeed look, but never perceive.  
For this people’s heart has grown dull,  
And their ears are hard of hearing,  
and they have shut their eyes;  
so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears,  
and understand with their hearts and turn – and I would heal them.’ ”

- **LISTENING AND ITS EFFECTS**
- **AREAS WHERE IT IS DIFFICULT TO LISTEN**
- **THE WAY I LISTEN TO MY SPOUSE DEEPLY INFLUENCES THE WAY I LISTEN TO OTHERS AND TO GOD**

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## **LISTENING**

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# QUESTIONS

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**In what area do I find it most difficult to listen to you? How do I feel when you talk about this area?**

**NOTE:**

**Examples of “areas” that we are referring to in this question are topics like those shown below. It should be the topic where you have the most difficulty listening to your spouse when he/she wants to talk about it.**

- Activities
- Children
- Decision-making
- Discipline
- Finances
- Health
- Household responsibilities
- In-laws
- Jobs
- Parenting
- Relatives
- Sex
- Spirituality
- Time schedules

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## LISTENING

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**Children**

**Finances**

**Time**

**Sex**

**Death**

**In-laws**

***Areas for Reaching  
Out to Each Other***

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***Areas for Reaching Out to Each Other***

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## Why we avoid communicating in sensitive areas

- We tried to discuss it in the past and ended up in conflict.
- We don't know how to talk about it.
- We are afraid of hurting or being hurt.

## Typical ways we might react to each other's feelings

- **Rejection**

Dismissing, denying, or questioning why the other person has the feeling  
("Don't feel that way" or "Why do you feel that way?")

- **Toleration**

Acknowledging - but not accepting the other's feeling  
("That's an interesting feeling.")

- **Acceptance**

Embracing both the feeling and the person who has the feeling  
("Thank you for trusting me with your feeling. Tell me more.")

Note: Acceptance relates to your spouse's feelings, not necessarily to their opinions, thoughts, prejudices, behaviors, etc.

**What are the effects on our relationship when we react in these ways?**

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## ***Areas for Reaching Out to Each Other***

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## How Do We Communicate?

- **55%** Non-verbal communication
- **38%** Tone of voice or the way we say things
- **7%** The words we say

Reference: The Power of Non-verbal Communication, Henry H. Calero, Silver Lake Publishing, 2005

### Non-verbal Communication

- Non-verbals don't lie, but they can be misunderstood.
- Intensity is often better expressed with non-verbals.

### Non-verbal communication includes:

<b>Tone of Voice</b>	whispering, shouting, confident, apprehensive
<b>Facial Expressions</b>	smiling, frowning, looking into eyes, looking away, rolling eyes, grimacing, scowling
<b>Body Language</b>	leaning forward, leaning away, shrugging, slumping, waving hands, tapping foot, folding arms, drumming fingers, jumping up and down
<b>Sounds</b>	laughing, giggling, crying, sighing, gasping, clearing your throat, silence
<b>Physical Touch</b>	holding hands, hugging, pulling away, caressing

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## *Areas for Reaching Out to Each Other*

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## **Elements of the Dialogue Process**

1. Writing – self-disclosure through feelings
2. Exchange – offer/receive the love letter as a special gift
3. Verbal Dialogue – explore only one feeling from the two letters

## **Topics or behaviors that do not belong in dialogue**

- Revealing things that should be confessed only to clergy or professional counselors (confessional material)
- Saying negative things about your spouse
- Making blunt/cruel comments and then excusing yourself by saying you are just being honest
- Garbage dumping: blaming your spouse, bringing up old stuff, unloading burdens
- Manipulating: sharing things in the hope that your spouse will change
- Problem-solving: working on problems rather than on your relationship

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## ***Areas for Reaching Out to Each Other***

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## AREAS FOR REACHING OUT TO EACH OTHER

### Instructions:

1. Review the list below, and check all the areas where you think you have difficulty communicating with each other.
2. Choose an area in which you have strong feelings.
3. Write your love letter, briefly mentioning the area, but focusing on your feelings.
4. Describe your strongest feeling as fully as possible. Remember, the love letter is about you and your feeling and not about the area.

Check all that apply

- Money
- Health
- Time
- Job - Mine/Yours
- Rest
- Sex
- Our communication with each other
- Children (step-children)
- Relatives
- Relationship with God
- Atmosphere in our home
- Relationship with our adult children
- Retirement
- In-laws
- Death
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

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### ***Areas for Reaching Out to Each Other***

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# ***God's Desire for Marriage***

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## ***God's Desire for Marriage***

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## **Living intimately and responsibly**

- All of us long for happiness
- Society and the media propose various ways to find happiness
- True happiness results from the unity that comes from living intimately and responsibly

## **When we live intimate and responsible relationships, we experience unity.**

- **Unity** - oneness of heart and mind
- **Intimate relationship** – being open to love and be loved
- **Responsible relationship** – making decisions to love and be loved in our daily lives
- Forgiveness and healing are a part of living intimately and responsibly

## **God's desire for marriage - for us to be the best couple we can be**

### **Genesis 2:24-25**

*Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.*

## **God reveals Himself through the love of a couple**

### **Genesis 1:26-27**

*Then God said: "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."*

*So God created humankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*

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# ***God's Desire for Marriage***

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**To be married is an extraordinary vocation/way of life**

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**God's desire for marriage is attainable when we take responsibility for the quality of our relationship and strive for intimacy.**

- **Sexually**

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- **Spiritually**

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- **Emotionally**

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***God's Desire for Marriage***

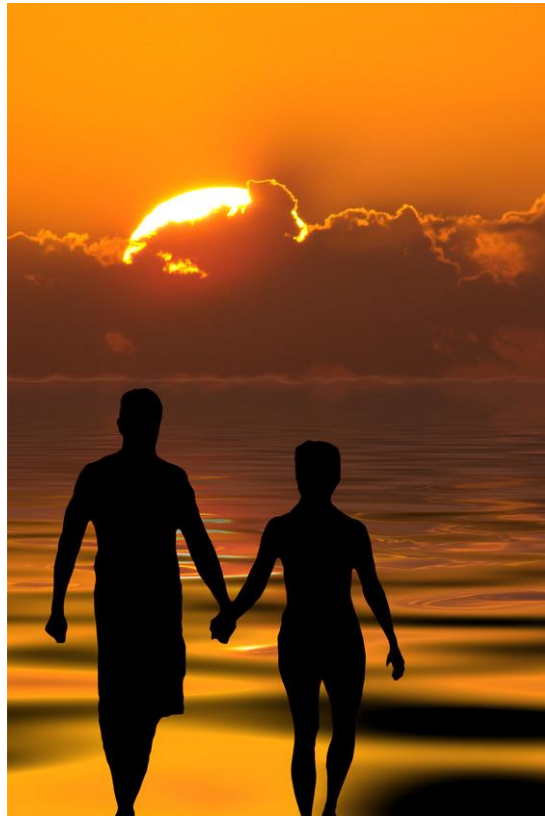
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**We all have a choice to make**

- **The world's way**
  - **God's desire for marriage**
- 
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**Question:**

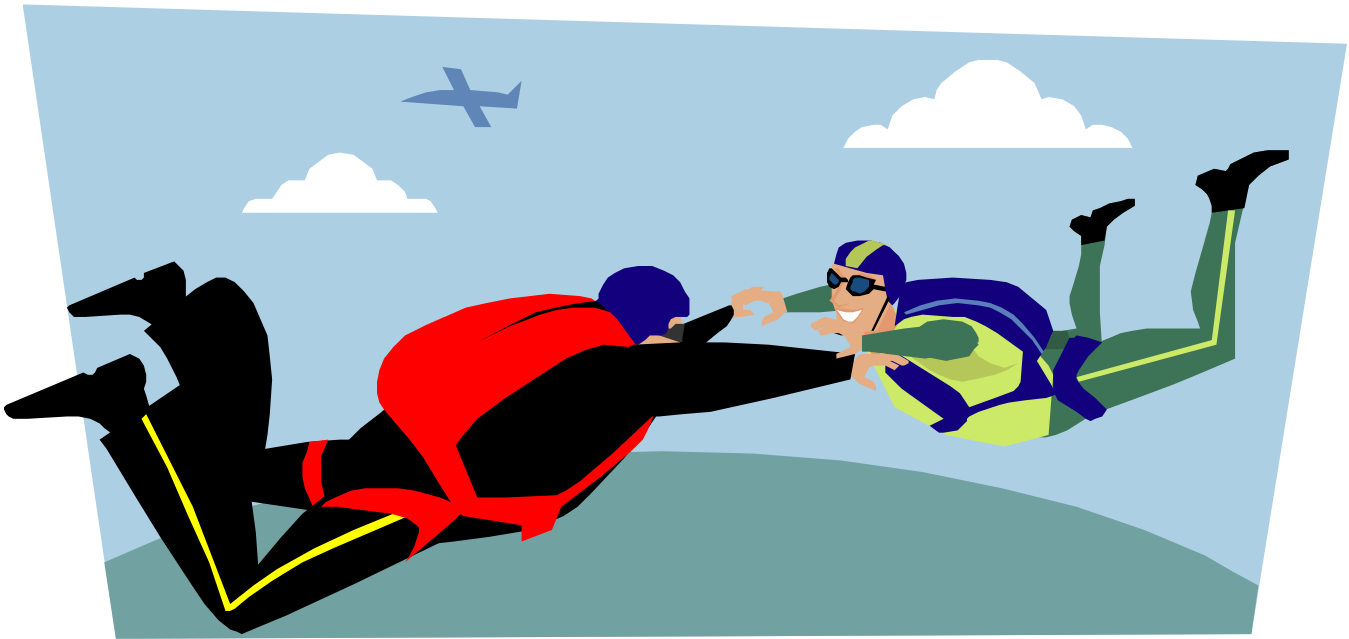
Name a time when I experienced intimacy with you. What is my strongest feeling as I recall that time now?



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***God's Desire for Marriage***

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## ***RISKING TO TRUST IN DIALOGUE***

*Trust in the goodness of your spouse –  
and risk to share your feelings*

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### **RISKING TO TRUST IN DIALOGUE**

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## **OBSTACLES and FEARS LIMIT MY TRUST**

Sometimes I find it difficult to accept my own feelings.

My poor self-image is an obstacle that limits my willingness to trust my spouse with my feelings.

I am often reluctant to trust my spouse with a feeling in dialogue because I fear that he or she may judge me negatively.

My fears also limit my willingness to trust my spouse in dialogue.

Here are a few examples:

- fear of change
- fear of conflict
- fear of criticism
- fear of failure
- fear of having to live up to expectations
- fear of having to take responsibility
- fear of hurting my spouse
- fear of losing control
- fear of losing my independence
- fear of looking foolish
- fear of rejection
- fear of rocking the boat

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### **RISKING TO TRUST IN DIALOGUE**

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## THE WAYS I LIMIT MY TRUST

### Instructions

1. Reflect on your experience of sharing feelings with your spouse in dialogue during this Marriage Encounter experience.
2. In the exercise below, check off all of the ways that you may have found yourself reluctant to share your feelings in your dialogues.

### Exercise

- I did not accept my own feelings and I was not ready to share them with you.
- I worried that if I shared my feelings, you would see me as:
- weak                      unattractive                      silly                      dumb
- uninformed                      stubborn                      other \_\_\_\_\_
- I feared that being open and vulnerable with my feelings could lead to your having higher expectations of me.
- I thought that sharing my feelings could lead to rejection or being “put down.”
- I feared being misunderstood if I shared feelings that I don’t even understand myself. I judge I have been misunderstood in the past and don’t want that to happen again.
- I believed that you would see my feeling as a problem for you to solve.
- I was afraid you might use what I revealed about myself against me.
- I thought that if I shared my feelings with you, I might have to change.
- I found it more comfortable not to share too deeply.
- Other: Describe: \_\_\_\_\_

Note: You will NOT be sharing this exercise with your spouse.

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## RISKING TO TRUST IN DIALOGUE

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**Trust in dialogue is a decision to risk sharing my feelings with my spouse.**

**TRUST IS A STATE OF MIND, RISK IS TAKING AN ACTION.**

***DEFINITIONS:***

- Trust is having confidence in my spouse's love for me.
- Risk is going beyond my obstacles and fears and becoming vulnerable by sharing my deepest feelings with my spouse.

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**RISKING TO TRUST IN DIALOGUE**

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## **DULCINEA**

*from the death scene in Man of La Mancha*

*“Please ... try to remember ... you looked at me and you called me by another name ... Dulcinea, Dulcinea. Once you found a girl and called her Dulcinea. When you spoke the name, an angel seemed to whisper, ‘Dulcinea, Dulcinea.’*

*Dulcinea, Dulcinea ... Won’t you please bring back the dream of Dulcinea? Won’t you bring me back the bright and shining glory of Dulcinea, Dulcinea?”*

**“Perhaps ... perhaps it was not a dream.”**

*“You spoke of a dream ... and about the ‘quest’ ...”*

**“The quest ... the words ... tell me, tell me the words.”**

*“To dream the impossible dream ... but they’re your own words ...  
to fight the unbeatable foe ... don’t you remember?  
To bear with unbearable sorrow ... you must remember!  
To run where the brave dare not go.”*

**“To right the unrightable wrong ...[Yes!] To love pure and chaste from afar... [Yes!] To try when your arms are too weary, to reach the unreachable star!”**

*“Thank you, my Lord.”*

**“But this is not seemly, my Lady. On thy knees to me?”**

*“My Lord, you’re not well!”*

**“Not well? What is illness to the body of a knight errant? What matter wounds? For each time he falls, he shall rise again! And woe to the wicked! Sancho!”**

*“Here, your grace!”*

**“My armor, my sword!”**

*“More misadventure ... “*

**“Adventures, old friend. Oh, the trumpets of glory now call me to ride. Yes, the trumpets are calling to me. And wherever I ride, ever staunch at my side, my squire and my lady shall be. I am I, Don Quixote, the Lord of La Mancha; our destiny calls and we go. And the wild winds of fortune shall carry us onward ... Withersoever they blow ... onward to glory ..... I ..... go.”**

*“My Lord!”*

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## **RISKING TO TRUST IN DIALOGUE**

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## **THE FOLLOWING DO NOT BELONG IN DIALOGUE:**

- Revealing things that should be confessed only to a pastor/clergy or professional counselor (confessional material)
- Saying negative things about your spouse
- Making blunt/cruel comments and then excusing yourself by saying you are just being honest
- Garbage dumping: blaming your spouse, bringing up old stuff, unloading burdens
- Manipulating: sharing things in the hope that your spouse will change
- Working on problems rather than on your relationship

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## **RISKING TO TRUST IN DIALOGUE**

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# QUESTIONS

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**What feeling do I have that is most difficult for me to share with you because it makes me vulnerable?**

**Describe that feeling in full and loving detail.**

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## RISKING TO TRUST IN DIALOGUE

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# ***Impact of Dialogue in Our Daily Lives***

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## ***Impact of Dialogue in Our Daily Lives***

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# Invitation to Daily Dialogue

## W.E.D.S.

**W**rite your love letter to a question you have already chosen. Write for 10 minutes. Choose “prime time” when you can write for the full time without interruption. You can write side-by-side or separate to write. This time does not have to be the same for both spouses – just a time that is best for you. As you write, keep your spouse in mind. First answer the question in two or three sentences, sharing your thoughts. Then, reflecting on your answer, get in touch with your feeling(s). Use the “hot pen” method. Write your feelings honestly, openly and sincerely. No one is to blame for how you are feeling. Try not to justify why you feel the way you do. The only one that you can change is yourself. Simply reveal more of yourself. Describe your feelings in a way that will be relatable to your spouse.

**E**xchange your love letter silently and lovingly when you get together. This is a gift of yourselves to each other. Comments are not necessary. Do not try to influence your spouse before he/she has a chance to read your letter. Read each other’s love letter twice silently. The first time read for the head – to get a basic understanding of the words. The second time read for the heart – to go beyond the words and try to absorb the person and his/her feelings.

**D**ialogue in “prime time” - choosing a time when you have 10 uninterrupted minutes together for describing your feelings. Begin your verbal dialogue after you have read the letters twice. Decide which of you expressed the strongest feeling. Sit close to each other and give each other your full attention. Concentrate on asking questions that will “pull out” the strongest feeling gently. Attempt to grow in awareness of each other. When you have exhausted all the ways to describe the strongest feeling, or 10 minutes is up, the dialogue is over. This whole step should take no longer than 10 minutes. Remember that dialogue is for the sharing of feeling(s) with each other. It is not a time to solve problems or reach a decision. Be aware that it is impossible to share deeply in your letters or in your verbal dialogue if you are distracted by TV, phones, children or other outside influences.

**S**elect a question for your dialogue for the next day. Do not wait or it may not happen. Choose a question that is pertinent to your relationship. Take turns choosing the question.

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## *Impact of Dialogue in Our Daily Lives*

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## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **How long will daily dialogue really take?**

Dialogue at home is not like the dialogues you have experienced during this Marriage Encounter experience. Daily dialogue at home will usually be less intense and will take only 20 minutes a day. Write on the question for 10 minutes. You might set a timer when you start so you know exactly when to stop writing. The 10-minute verbal dialogue time includes reading your letters twice and spending some time discerning the strongest feeling. Reset the timer when you exchange your letters and stop talking when time is up. If you think you need more time to dialogue, choose the same question or a question based on today's dialogue for tomorrow.

### **How do we choose the strongest feeling from our letters?**

Strongest feeling does not always mean the one given a higher number of intensity in the written dialogue. "Strongest feeling" may mean the feeling you both agree is the more significant for your relationship at that moment.

### **How do we dialogue when we're on vacation?**

If you have children, you can try giving them a quiet activity to keep them occupied while you are writing your letters (remember this is only 10 minutes). If your children are accustomed to your "special time," they will know that they will have your attention when you are finished. You can read your letters and do the verbal part of your dialogue later, when they're asleep, while you sit together by the fire.

### **What if we're shift workers? How can we dialogue when one of us is away on business?**

If you are shift workers you can write your love letters at different times during the day and then do the verbal part of the dialogue when you are together. The same is true if you are separated by work that takes one of you out of town. You can develop a series of questions to write on while you are apart and then share your letters and dialogue when you are together again. In today's world, e-mail and Skype can make communicating much easier.

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## ***Impact of Dialogue in Our Daily Lives***

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## **What's the best time and place to dialogue?**

This will depend totally on you and your schedules. It is most important that you choose a time and place when and where you will not be distracted by the TV, phone, and other electronic devices. Tell your children that this is your special time and you are not to be disturbed.

## **Why do we choose a question for the next day? Why not just choose a question at the beginning of our dialogue time?**

It's important to select the next day's question when you finish your dialogue. Leaving the selection of the question until the next day can create a burden. There's usually a fascinating conversation that goes something like this: "What do you want to dialogue on tonight?" "I don't know. What do you want to dialogue on?" By the time you decide on a question, your prime time for writing may have expired! In addition, selecting the question in advance allows for writing separately at different times during the day.

## **How do we choose/create a question?**

The question you choose should be relevant to your relationship and what is going on in your lives right now. You need to be careful and work together on the wording of the question so that one of you doesn't see yourself as a "target." Be sure that your question points to a feeling – "How do I feel about that?"

Sometimes your next question will be a follow-up to the dialogue you just completed, or you might choose a question from one of the lists of questions you will collect over time. Before you leave here tomorrow you will be given a starter list of questions to take home with you.

WWME.org has lots of resources to help you to choose a question. There is a "Dialogue Question for the Day" posted every day. You can even subscribe to have it sent directly to you. There is a catalogue of questions posted on the website with approximately 10,000 questions to choose from. No excuse for not having a question! There are additional ideas for family dialogue and scripture dialogue also available on the WWME website.

Here are a couple of "generic questions" you might keep in mind. These questions are always appropriate.

How do I feel about 'us' today?

What was my strongest feeling today? Describe fully in loving detail.

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## ***Impact of Dialogue in Our Daily Lives***

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**How will we know that our dialogue is over?**

When you both believe that you are experiencing the same feeling or 10 minutes is up, the dialogue is over. If you don't think you've "got it," then agree to dialogue on the same topic the next day, with the question restated a little differently.

**How will we know that we are “doing it right”?**

If you are feeling closer, more in tune, and are discovering more about each other as a result of your dialogue, you are “doing it right”!

**When do we get to solve our problems?**

Although you might be tempted to solve problems, try to avoid that temptation to problem-solve during the dialogue time. Sometimes dialogue opens a door to a good healthy discussion that may last for another 10 or 20 minutes. This discussion is not dialogue, because you have moved away from describing your feelings. The advantage to dialoguing about your feelings is that each of you will have a better understanding of the perspective you are bringing to the discussion when you DO set about solving a problem or making a decision.

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***Impact of Dialogue in Our Daily Lives***

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**CANA: JOHN 2:1-11**

*On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."*

*Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now."*

*Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.*

**EXERCISE:**

As a result of our time together during this Marriage Encounter experience, what do I most appreciate about you, my spouse?

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What is something meaningful that is happening in our relationship because of our dialogues?

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***Impact of Dialogue in Our Daily Lives***

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## QUESTIONS

What do we most need to dialogue about now to grow in our relationship? How do I feel about that?

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### *Impact of Dialogue in Our Daily Lives*

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## DIALOGUE SERIES QUESTIONS

When you are having difficulty communicating in a specific area, it is helpful to use the following series of questions to focus your dialogue on that area over the course of a week or two.

[Examples of "areas" are listed in the section "Areas for Reaching Out to Each Other."]

HDIFAT?            How do I feel about this (or that)?

DFILD              Describe feeling in loving detail.

1. Why do I want to dialogue in this area? What do I hope to gain? HDIFAT?
2. What do I like best about you in this area? HDIFAT?
3. What do I like least about you in this area? HDIFAT?
4. What do I like best about myself in this area? HDIFAT?
5. What do I like least about myself in this area? HDIFAT?
6. What do I like best about us in this area? HDIFAT?
7. What is it about me that affects our communication in this area? HDIFAT?
8. When am I least open to listen to you in this area? HDIFAT?
9. In this area, what feeling do I find most difficult to share with you? DFILD.
10. After dialoguing in this area, what am I willing to change for the sake of our relationship? HDIFAT?

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### *Impact of Dialogue in Our Daily Lives*

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# ***Marriage as Covenant***

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## ***Marriage as Covenant***

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## Our Wedding Day

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### Covenant vs Contract

**Covenant** - a relationship based on unconditional love

**Contract** - a conditional agreement; if one party does not perform, then the other party does not have to perform

A **covenant** is unconditional

A **covenant** is forever

A **covenant** has limitless possibilities.

A **contract** is a 50/50 agreement

A **contract** can be terminated

A **contract** has limits.

It is a **covenant** love - the unconditional love that one spouse has for the other – that will sustain a marriage.

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### Marriage as Covenant

- Marriage between a baptized man and a baptized woman is not only a covenant, but also a sign of God's love
- Marriage is holy and important to the Church

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## *Marriage as Covenant*

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## **Ephesians 5:21, 25-33**

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, because we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband. (NRSV)

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## **We are Members of His Body**

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## ***Marriage as Covenant***

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## **We are the Church**

The couple relationship is a "little church," filled with the same gifts of our big church – such as love, mercy, forgiveness, tradition, symbolism.

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## **The Gifts of Our Covenant**

- Contagious love
- Being life-giving
- Raised above the ordinary
- Healing

Through these gifts of our marriage relationship, God is tangible and visible. These gifts are meant not only for ourselves but for the benefit of the Church and the world.

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## ***Marriage as Covenant***

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## If Tomorrow Never Comes

Sometimes late at night, I lie awake and watch her sleeping.  
She's lost in peaceful dreams, so I turn out the lights and lay there in the dark.  
And a thought crosses my mind: If I never wake up in the morning,  
Would she ever doubt the way I feel about her in my heart?

If tomorrow never comes, will she know how much I loved her?  
Did I try in every way to show her every day that she's my only one?  
And if my time on earth were through, and she must face this world without me,  
Is the love I gave her in the past gonna be enough to last if tomorrow never comes?

'Cause I've lost loved ones in my life, who never knew how much I loved them.  
Now I live with those regrets that my true feelings for them never were revealed.  
So I made a promise to myself to say each day how much she means to me.  
And avoid that circumstance where there's no second chance to tell her how I feel.

'Cause if tomorrow never comes, will she know how much I loved her?  
Did I try in every way to show her every day that she's my only one?  
And if my time on earth were through, and she must face this world without me,  
Is the love I gave her in the past gonna be enough to last if tomorrow never comes?

So tell that someone that you love just what you're thinking of,  
If tomorrow never comes.

Music & lyrics by Kent Blazy & Garth Brooks  
Sung by Garth Brooks  
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## *Marriage as Covenant*

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# ***Living our Covenant***



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## *Living our Covenant*

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# The Impossible Dream

From the Broadway Musical The Man of La Mancha  
Lyrics by Joe Darion



To dream ... the impossible dream ...  
To fight ... the unbeatable foe ...  
To bear ... with unbearable sorrow ...  
To run ... where the brave dare not go ...  
To right ... the unrightable wrong ...  
To love ... pure and chaste from afar ...  
To try ... when your arms are too weary ...  
To reach ... the unreachable star ...

This is my quest, to follow that star ...  
No matter how hopeless, no matter how far ...  
To fight for the right, without question or pause ...  
To be willing to march into Hell, for a Heavenly cause ...

And I know if I'll only be true, to this glorious quest,  
That my heart will lie will lie peaceful and calm,  
when I'm laid to my rest ...

And the world will be better for this:  
That one man, scorned and covered with scars,  
Still strove, with his last ounce of courage,  
To reach ... the unreachable star ....

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*Living our Covenant*

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## ***Our Marriage Covenant***

What are my hopes and dreams for our relationship as a result of this Marriage Encounter experience?

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## ***Continuing the Journey***

**Luke 24:30-33** (*New Revised Standard Version*):

***When he was with them at table, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together.***

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## ***Living our Covenant***

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## ***Being Open and Apostolic***

*There is a greater purpose for our love than simply our own happiness. As encountered couples who understand the covenant nature of our marriage, we are called to be open and apostolic.*

*To be open is to be receptive to hearing God's voice speaking in our hearts and speaking through the voices of others. To be apostolic is to respond to God's call – to go out and spread the good news.*

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Both marriage and the call to ministry are covenants of relationship.

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## ***Living our Covenant***

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## ***Couple Power***

The love of Christ present in our relationship is our “Couple Power.”

This incredible gift is meant to be shared with a world that is longing for hope. Our “Couple Power” enables us to go out on mission in ways that might challenge us as individuals.

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***The unique gifts you have as a couple make you irreplaceable.***

***You can make a difference.***

***Together we can change the world!***

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**WE CAN CHANGE THE WORLD**

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*Living our Covenant*

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## Exercise for Couples

How do I hear God calling us to be open and apostolic in sharing our love as a couple? Consider one or two examples. Some ideas are listed below.

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Consider doing together an activity that you already do individually:

- receive communion side by side as a couple
- serve on a church committee as a couple
- join your spouse for a regular time of prayer or Bible study
- shop together, work out together, etc.

Consider a new area of ministry in your church:

- assist in the worship service (as ushers, readers, communion servers, etc.) as a couple
- take communion to the sick or homebound together
- teach religious education or sing in the choir as a couple
- be a contact couple for Marriage Encounter
- help prepare engaged couples for marriage
- ask your pastor about the needs in your congregation for more ideas

Consider volunteering as a couple in your community:

- work together in a soup kitchen, food pantry, or other local initiative
- volunteer to work with children or support local school functions
- work together in a nursing home or hospital
- open your home to foster children

# Keeping our Relationship a Priority

Some tools:

♥ Attention to our communication in and out of dialogue

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♥ Couple prayer

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♥ Attention to our sexual relationship

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♥ Being involved with the Marriage Encounter community

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♥ Re-evaluation

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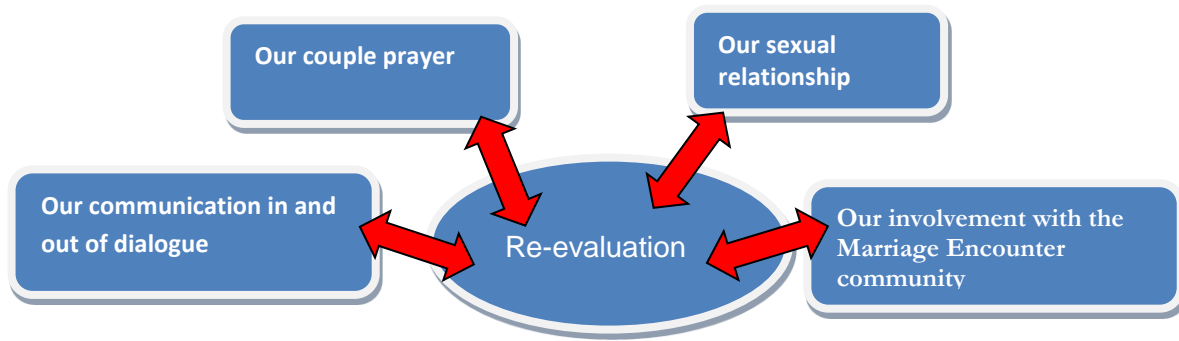


***We need all of these tools to be the best married couple we can be!***

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*Living our Covenant*

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**Exercise on Re-evaluation:**

1. What, specifically, am I going to do in order to make our relationship a top priority?

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2. What attitudes and behaviors do I need to change to make this possible?

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**Attitudes to consider:**

- I deserve my time.
- Let someone else do it.
- If they need me, they'll ask.
- No one can do what I'm doing now as well as I can!
- I don't want to leave my comfort zone.
- I don't have anything to offer.
- My children deserve every advantage this world can offer.
- If I don't do for my children, who will?
- I have to keep up with the Joneses.
- I don't have a choice.
- I'm a private person, and I don't do group sharing.
- My prayer is between me and God.
- I've always done it this way.
- What will others think of me?
- But I have to... stay fit, stay current with news, get ahead in my job, etc.
- I have to work overtime; we need the extra income

*Living our Covenant*

# **OUR DREAM TO CHANGE THE WORLD**

***One way to keep the dream alive is to invite others to this Worldwide Marriage Encounter experience.***

## **Why invite?**

- Others may not hear about Worldwide Marriage Encounter unless you tell them!
- Knowing what you know now, how would you feel if no one had told you about it?
- Inviting your friends and family is a good way to surround yourself with support for living your new lifestyle.
- We need your help to spread the word!

## **Whom to invite?**

- Married couples who are committed to each other and are open to making their marriage even better than it is now.

## **How to invite?**

- Continue to dialogue and others will want what you have.
- Tell others about your Marriage Encounter experience and what it did for you.
- Spread the word however you can!

Bulletin Announcements

Facebook

Twitter

Emails

Christmas letters

Host a wine & cheese or dessert event

Romantic dinners

Gift others with a paid application

Raffle off an application

Arrange for a couple to speak at your church

Put brochures at your church or business

Link church website to Marriage Encounter's

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*Living our Covenant*

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## ***OUR DREAM TO CHANGE THE WORLD***

**Another way to keep the dream alive is to help us make the Worldwide Marriage Encounter experience available for others**

***Our vision "Love One Another As I Have Loved You."***

*It is through your generosity that the dream of changing the world with love can become a reality. Worldwide Marriage Encounter has an active presence in 90 countries around the world because couples like all of us sacrificed to make it happen.*

### ***Sharing in the Dream***

- Cost of the programs
- Giving from substance
- How to donate

#### **Discussion Question:**

How much are we willing to share financially so that the dream and the mission of Worldwide Marriage Encounter may continue?

### ***Wrap up***

**Take home packet**

#### **Dialogue question for Monday:**

**How do I feel about continuing the journey we've begun through our dialogue at home? Describe feeling(s) fully and completely.**

#### **WORSHIP CELEBRATION**

*Please join us even if you are not a member of the Faith Expression/s sponsoring this event. We would like to end our time giving thanks to God together!*

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*Living our Covenant*

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# *The History of Worldwide Marriage Encounter*

*The story of Worldwide Marriage Encounter began in 1952 when a young Spanish priest, Father Gabriel Calvo, began developing a series of conferences for married couples. The focus was on the development of an open and honest relationship within marriage and learning to live out a sacramental relationship in the service of others (within the Catholic Church, marriage is considered one of the sacraments). For approximately 10 years this series of conferences for married couples was presented in Spain. In 1962, Fr. Calvo offered them as a weekend retreat to couples in Barcelona under the name **Encuentro Conjugal**. The experience was very successful and rapidly spread throughout Spain.*

In 1966, Father Calvo and Jaime and Mercedes Ferrer, one of the Spanish couples who had been helping to present the retreats, addressed the International Confederation of Christian Family movements in Caracas. From there, the weekend spread to Latin America and to Spanish speaking couples in the United States. In August of 1967, a Mexican couple, Alfonso and Mercedes Gomez-Benet, and a Maryknoll Missionary priest from Mexico City, Father Donald Hessler, M.M., presented the Weekend to seven couples and a few priests at the close of the Christian Family Movement convention at Notre Dame University. This experience was so well received that by the summer of 1968, 50 couples and 29 priests were presenting the **Encuentro Conjugal** or **Marriage Encounter** program in the United States.

By January of 1969, under the leadership of Father Chuck Gallagher and several couples in New York, a new dream evolved. They saw a need for a strong emphasis on the development of "community" after the program, in order to provide support for living the values learned, especially for dialogue. In addition, the renewal of the Sacrament of Matrimony was a strong focus as a means for renewing the Roman Catholic Church. Father Chuck Gallagher saw this as more than a program, he saw it as a Movement for the Church that embodied the spirit of Vatican II.

The original Marriage Encounter Weekend conceived by Fr. Calvo still exists under the name of National Marriage Encounter, but in 1969 the New York group went out on its own to eventually become "Worldwide Marriage Encounter" (WWME). By the fall of 1971, this new Movement made the decision to spread the experience throughout the U.S. and to other parts of the world. Around the same time WWME Teams traveled first to Grand Forks, ND with the assurance of financial support, personnel, and training from the New York family, until the new unit could support itself. The only condition was that once self-support was realized, the same assistance would be given to other areas. WWME reached the West Coast in December at Santa Barbara.

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## *Living our Covenant*

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At about the same time, WWME began its international expansion with team couples being sent to Belgium and England. The first Canadian WWME Weekend in the English language was held in May 1973 in Ottawa. Franco-American teams helped organize the first Canadian French-language Weekend in September of 1975 in Ste. Foy, Quebec. Canada later reached out to Trinidad, and in 1990 WWME groups in the English and French-speaking Caribbean Islands became affiliated with Canada because of that connection.

The Weekend reached Guam, Saipan, and other US territories through couples and priests in the military.

The expansion continues today. A Worldwide Marriage Encounter experience in a variety of formats is now offered in about 90 countries around the world in numerous languages and dialects. Over one million six hundred thousand couples (and 24,000 priests and religious persons) had experienced the Weekend by 2012!

Even though the Worldwide Marriage Encounter experience was begun in the Roman Catholic Church, couples of other faiths began to attend and wanted it modified to their faith expression. Guidelines were set up for other Christian denominations to become a part of the Movement with the focus being the renewal of marriages for the renewal of their own Church. Currently, there are almost a dozen other Faith Expressions that have entered into an agreement to become a part of Worldwide Marriage Encounter.

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## *Living our Covenant*

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## **COMMUNION STATEMENT**

The Sacrament of Holy Communion will be celebrated Sunday afternoon at the close of the weekend. We as Lutherans believe the Sacrament gives us the opportunity to draw together with our spouses and with one another in a close fellowship around Christ's Body and Blood. We further believe the Sacrament is Christ present for you in and with the bread and wine. Its purpose is to forgive sin, to renew life and to assure you of salvation. It is offered to those who are baptized, repentant of their sins and wrongs, who trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, and who believe in the Presence of Christ in the Sacrament.

If you do not wish to commune, we will certainly honor your desire. However, we invite you to share in the warmth and closeness as we gather around Christ's altar.

## THERE'S A NEW WORLD SOMEWHERE

There's a new world somewhere, they call the promised land;  
And I'll be there someday if you will hold my hand;  
I still need you there beside me no matter what I do,  
For I know I'll never find another you.

There is always someone for each of us, they say,  
And you'll be my someone forever and a day;  
I could search the whole world over until my life is through,  
And I know I'll never find another you.

It's a long, long journey, so stay by my side.  
If I walk through a storm, you'll be my guide, be my guide.  
If they gave me a fortune, my treasure would be small,  
I could lose it all tomorrow and never mind at all;  
But if I should lose your love, dear, I don't know what I'd do,  
For I know I'll never find another you.

It's a long, long journey, so stay by our side.  
If we walk through a storm you'll be our guide, be our guide.  
If they gave us a fortune, our treasure would be small,  
We could lose it all tomorrow and never mind at all;  
But if we should lose your love, dears, we don't know what we'd do,  
For we know we'll never find another "US"