

What is the Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend?

The Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend is an experience 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:

Ways to free yourself to better experience what the Weekend has to offer:

- This is not a problem-solving weekend; it's to strengthen your relationship.
- Let the presenters focus on the Weekend schedule so you can focus on your relationship.
- Resist the temptation to stay connected with the world outside of this Weekend. Take advantage of this time to make a stronger connection with your spouse instead!
- Respect the privacy of other couples on this Weekend and let them focus on their own relationships.
- Avoid comparing this Weekend to other retreats or seminars you have attended or what someone may have told you about their Marriage Encounter Weekend. 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.

Welcome, Introduction, and Feelings

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.

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

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.

Welcome, Introduction, and Feelings

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
TOTALS	H	O	T	C

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

Encounter with Self

QUESTIONS

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.**

Encounter with Self

The World's Plan for our Marriage

My expectations about marriage:

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

Exercise:

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

Three Stages of Relationship

- Romance
- Disillusionment
- Joy

Marriage in Today's World

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?

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 were a single person. Living the married singles lifestyle inevitably leads to progressively deeper disillusionment.

Marriage in Today's World

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

Marriage in Today's World

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

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 _____

Areas for Reaching Out to Each Other

THE WAYS I LIMIT MY TRUST

Instructions

1. Reflect on your experience of sharing feelings with your spouse in dialogue this weekend.
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.

Risking to Trust in Dialogue

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 today, what do I most appreciate about you, my spouse?

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

Impact of Daily Dialogue in Our Lives

Our Marriage Covenant

What are my hopes and dreams for our relationship as a result of this Weekend?

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.

WE CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

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.

Consider doing together an activity that you already do individually:

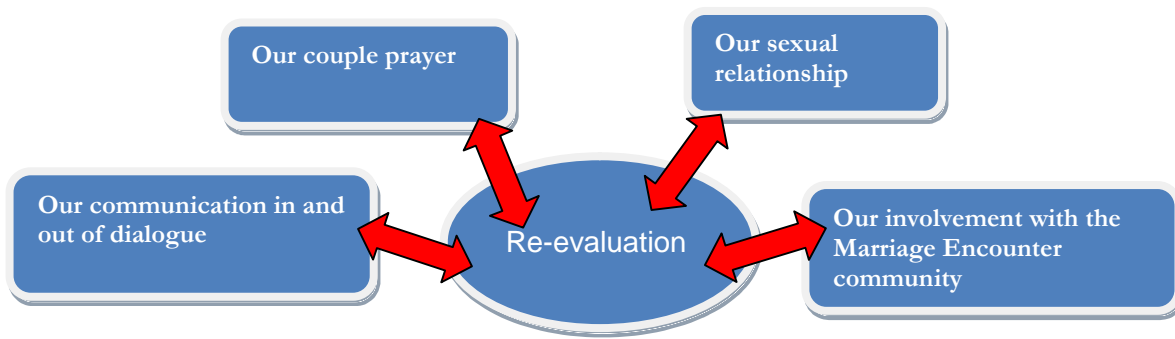
- receive communion side by side as a couple
- serve on a church committee as a couple
- join your spouse for a regular time of prayer or Bible study
- shop together, work out together, etc.

Consider a new area of ministry in your parish:

- 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



Exercise on Re-evaluation:

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

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

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

