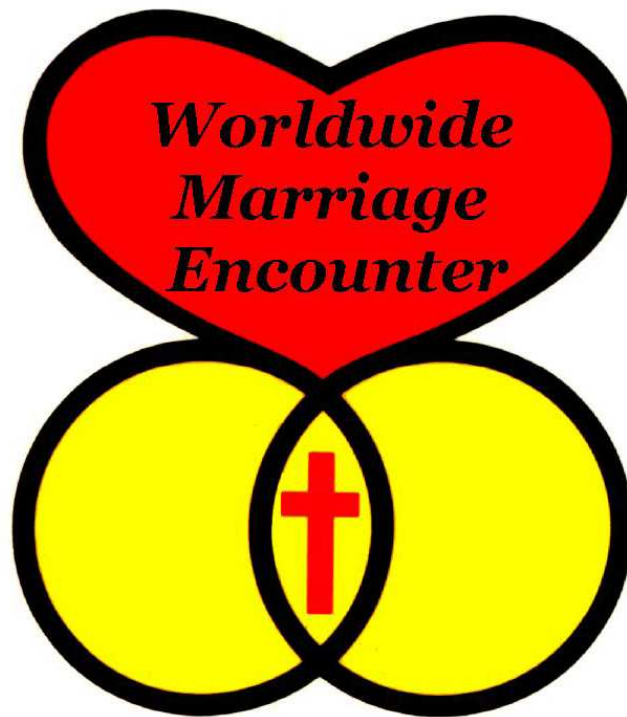

WORLDWIDE MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER



LOVE ONE ANOTHER, AS I HAVE LOVED YOU

JOHN 15:12

THE WEDS MANUAL

THE NEXT 90 DAYS.....

OUR DIALOGUE CONTINUES

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WELCOME To The Lutheran Marriage Encounter Community!

Dearest Lovers,

We extend our warmest welcome to the family of Lutheran Marriage Encounter! It is our hope that you will find continuing support and enrichment for your marriage by your active participation in Community. We are glad you have decided to use this WEDS manual.

Using our WEDS Manual showed us the true value of daily dialogue. Following our weekend, we were enthusiastic to continue the intimacy we regained. We looked forward to our daily dialogue time and enjoyed going through the 90 questions offered in the manual. It was a good review of the concepts introduced on our weekend. Even though we had been married for 26 years at the time, by sharing our feelings in dialogue we were discovering each other in a new and richer way. Our communication took on a depth that gave us hope for our love to continue to grow and deepen. We also noticed positive signs in our family and workplace as we implemented some of the communication skills we learned on our weekend. Our way of life would never be the same, and we welcomed the change as we embraced the dialoguing lifestyle.

OUR MISSION

Lutheran Marriage Encounter is a ministry dedicated to assisting married couples to live intimate and responsible relationships by providing an Encounter Weekend Experience as well as ongoing community support.

OUR VISION is to see the Lutheran Church renewed and our world changed through strengthened couple relationships and stronger personal relationships with Christ.

When we respond to our Lord's call and allow the Light of Jesus to shine through our relationship, we become a visible sign of God's Love. Our love for each other reflects Christ's great unconditional love for us. Our light is needed in today's world more than ever before. As we respond to our call to love each other and to share our love, our relationship becomes more trusting and intimate. Our families are strengthened by our compassion and acceptance. Our Church is renewed!

You will achieve God's desire for your marriage and your relationship when you continually use the five tools learned on your LME weekend experience to keep your covenant-love a priority: (1) Constant attention to our communication, (2) Attention to our sexual relationship, (3) Couple Prayer, (4) Journeying with others, and (5) Re-evaluation. Striving to keep our covenant-love alive is a wonderful journey. All of us in your LME community are honored to travel with you on your journey.

Changing the world is a difficult task, but we can make a difference beginning with one couple, at a time. Jesus was one person. His divine purpose and teachings are just as relevant in today's world as they were more than 2000 years ago. We hope you discover God's plan for your marriage. Define the "world" you can influence with your great love and commitment—your spouse, your family, your neighborhood or your church---and then open wide your doors and go out into the world! Together, we can make a difference!

We love you and keep you in our prayers – Happy Dialoguing!

Use Of This Manual

... The Pattern

- ♥ Read the short reflection for the day - You can do this together or separately but do it before you write your love letter.

DAY 1

On our weekend we learned that feelings are neither right nor wrong ... they simply are. A feeling is: a spontaneous inner reaction ...

- ♥ Dialogue – Write your love letters on your feelings. Dialogue on the strongest feeling.
- ♥ When finished with your verbal dialogue - read the reflection for the next day. You can be thinking about it during the next day.

... WEDS

- ♥ **Write** your love letter (10 minutes). These can be written together or separately.
- ♥ **Exchange** your love letters and read your spouses letter. Try to reserve this for prime time ... you deserve it!
- ♥ **Dialogue** on your feelings (10 minutes). Remember that the purpose of dialogue is to come to a common understanding of the strongest feeling, not to have a discussion of the topic or solve the problem.
- ♥ **Select** your question for the next day.

(While using this manual this means reading the reflection for the next day, unless you have something else that comes up that you really need to dialogue about.)

- ♥ Read the “**Guidelines for Dialogue**” before you begin. This will help you learn to dialogue together. At first, this may seem like a lot to do, but once you get past day one it will only take about 20 minutes each day. Most of all **ENJOY** your dialogue time together!

... Guidelines for Dialogue

WRITE:

First of all, keep in mind the person you are writing to...your spouse. Try to use the full, available time to write honestly and sincerely about your feelings on the reflection. Try to concentrate on your feelings, remembering the difference between thoughts and feelings. Describe your feelings as completely as possible and in terms that your spouse can relate to.

In writing, try not to blame or justify the way you feel. Do not try to impose guilt on your spouse or try to change each other. Simply reveal yourself deeply and intimately. Dialogue is not meant to solve problems or reach decisions, but to share with each other and get to know each other more intimately.

Finally, write for no more than ten minutes.

EXCHANGE:

When you get together after writing your love letters, exchange your notebooks gently and silently, for you are giving a precious gift. Comments are unnecessary; as you do not want to influence your spouse before he/or she has had a chance to read it.

Read each other's love letter twice silently. The first time, read with your head to understand the words. The next time, read with your heart to go beyond the words and absorb the person, and all the richness of his or/her feelings.

DIALOGUE:

The verbal dialogue is the time to talk about the strongest feelings in your love letters. Sit close to each other and give your full attention. Explore the strongest feeling between the two of your love letters.

Concentrate on talking about feelings, asking questions to try to understand more fully what the feeling is like. Be careful and gentle, attempting to grow in your awareness and acceptance of each other. Once you have understood the feeling as fully as you can, your dialogue for that day is over. If you want to discuss something that came up during that dialogue, put your notebooks aside and continue the discussion. Really try to stick to the ten minutes allowed for dialogue, as you do not want to get into a routine that is hard to continue on a daily basis.

SELECT:

Select a question for the next day. (While using this manual, read the reflection for the next day.)

Key to dialogue acronyms:

HDIFAT – How do I feel about that?

WAMFAT – What are my feelings about that?

HDIFSTWY – How do I feel sharing this with you?

DFILD – Describe feelings in loving detail.

... Love Letter Format

Dear _____,

In the beginning of your love letter, you can share a quality that you see in your spouse today, and how you have seen this quality in him/or her during the day.

Write 2 or 3 sentences describing your thoughts and reactions to the question or reflection.

State your strongest feeling(s), and spend the rest of the letter writing on describing your feeling. You can use shared experiences, a time when you believe your spouse may have experienced the same feeling you are describing. Describe your feeling the best way you can, giving its intensity, using your senses (smells like, tastes like, feels like, sounds like, or looks like). The purpose of the love letter is to share with your spouse to help them experience you through your feelings.

Close with an endearment and signature.

A feeling is a spontaneous inner reaction to a person, place or situation that I am experiencing or thinking about.

Feelings are neither right nor wrong. They have no morality attached to them. Morality only enters in when the feeling is acted upon.

Name the feeling and then describe the feeling using the word “like” and a description of what the feeling is like. You may want to use some of the following characteristics:

Category	Ways to describe the feeling	Example
Intensity	Rate feeling from 1 to 10	“My feeling is a ‘10’ “
Taste	sour, sweet, bitter, etc.	“My feeling would taste sour like a lemon.”
Touch	scratchy, soft, prickly, etc.	“It has a softness like silk.”
Color	red, blue, etc.	“My anger is red hot.”
Sound	high pitched; screech; wail of a siren; crack of thunder	“It sounds like the singing birds on a spring morning.”
Physical reaction	sick, chilled, giggling, etc.	“It was like an upset stomach.”
Similar past experience	childbirth, riding a bike, etc.	“My feeling was excited, like the time our child took her first steps.”
Nature scene	beautiful sunset; crashing waves; still forest	“My joyful feeling has all the colors of a sunset at sea.”
An image	hitting a home run	“I feel gleeful, like a kid who hit his first home run.”

...Feeling Words Starter List

Happy

airy
 animated
 blissful
 bright
 brisk
 buoyant
 cheerful
 cheery
 comfortable
 complacent
 content
 debonair
 ecstatic
 elated
 enthusiastic
 exhilarated
 exultant
 festive
 free & easy
 frisky
 genial
 glad
 gleeful
 happy
 high-spirited
 hilarious
 inspired
 jaunty
 jolly
 jovial
 joyful
 joyous
 jubilant
 lighthearted
 lively
 merry
 mirthful
 peaceful
 playful
 pleased
 rapturous
 satisfied
 saucy
 sparkling
 spirited
 sunny
 transported
 vivacious

Sad

cheerless
 clouded
 crestfallen
 dark
 dejected
 depressed
 despondent
 disconsolate
 discontented
 discouraged
 disheartened
 dismal
 downcast
 downhearted
 dreadful
 dreary
 dull
 flat
 frowning
 gloomy
 glum
 heavy-hearted
 ill at ease
 in the dumps
 joyless
 low
 low spirited
 melancholy
 moody
 moping
 mournful
 out of sorts
 sad
 somber
 sorrowful
 spiritless
 unhappy
 woebegone
 woeful
 sullen
 sulky

Eager

anxious
 ardent
 avid
 desirous
 eager
 earnest
 enthusiastic
 intent

keen

zealous

Angry

acrimonious
 angry
 annoyed
 bitter
 boiling
 churning
 enraged
 furious
 hot-headed
 in a huff
 in a stew
 incensed
 indignant
 inflamed
 infuriated
 irate
 irritated
 mad
 offended
 provoked
 resentful
 sulky
 up in arms
 virulent
 worked up
 wrathful

Hurt

aching
 afflicted
 agonized
 crushed
 distressed
 grieved
 hapless
 heartbroken
 hurt
 in despair
 in pain
 injured
 mournful
 offended
 piteous
 rueful
 suffering

tragic

woeful

worried

Afraid

afraid
 aghast
 alarmed
 anxious
 appalled
 apprehensive
 chicken
 cowardly
 diffident
 dismayed
 doubtful
 fainthearted
 fearful
 fidgety
 frightened
 hesitant
 horrified
 hysterical
 in fear
 insecure
 irresolute
 menaced
 misgiving
 nervous
 panicked
 petrified
 quaking
 scared
 shaky
 shocked
 suspicious
 terrified
 threatened
 timid
 trembling
 tremulous
 worried
 yellow

Interested

absorbed
 affected
 concerned
 curious
 engrossed
 excited
 fascinated
 inquiring
 inquisitive

interested

intrigued

nosy

snoopy

Fearless

audacious
 bold
 brave
 certain
 confident
 courageous
 daring
 dauntless
 determined
 encouraged
 enterprising
 gallant
 hardy
 heroic
 reassured
 resolute
 secure
 self-reliant
 spirited
 stouthearted

Doubtful

distrustful
 doubtful
 dubious
 hesitant
 indecisive
 misgiving
 perplexed
 questioning
 skeptical
 suspicious
 unbelieving
 uncertain
 wavering

Other

absorbed
 affected
 awed
 oppressed
 pathetic
 restful
 serene
 tranquil

WEEK ONE

...Discovering the Power of Feelings

On Sunday afternoon of the Weekend you were introduced to the five tools to keep your relationship a priority. This WEDS Manual will help you to focus on those five tools and make them a part of your daily life.

In week one and two we will focus on the tool of **Constant Attention to Our Communication**. There are three aspects that we learned about on the Weekend: faithfulness to dialogue, attentive listening and communication in and out of dialogue. To keep our relationship a priority, we need to be good communicators of our thoughts and feelings. The following dialogue questions will help you focus on the area of communication in your relationship.

DAY 1

On our weekend we learned that feelings are neither right nor wrong...they simply are. A feeling is: a spontaneous inner reaction to a person, place or situation we are experiencing or thinking about.

Feelings can influence behaviors and a behavior does have morality. I can feel angry and that in itself is not wrong, but if I punch someone because of my anger, then my action has morality. Understanding this is important to our future with dialogue. When we know we are not going to be judged about our feelings, we can feel free to share them with each other. This is the first step to building a new sense of intimacy and trust in our relationships.

*Remember there is a list of feeling words on the previous page to help you name your feeling.

A question for you:

What was my reaction to hearing about feelings on our weekend and what is my reaction to it today?

How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)

DAY 2

Our feelings are constantly changing and are of different intensities. I can have many feelings all at once. I can have a strong feeling about something today and next week it may not seem as strong to me...and this is why Daily Dialogue makes so much sense. If we are to truly stay in touch with each other, then we should share with each other who we are over and over again.

A question for you:

What is my strongest feeling today?

How do I feel sharing this with you? (HDIFSTWY?)

DAY 3

When I share my feelings, I am sharing a unique part of me. I give myself as a gift to you. When you share this part of yourself with me, you are giving me the most precious thing you could ever give me....you!

A question for you:

*When I reflect on what a gift you are to me I feel....?
Describe feelings in full and loving detail. (DFILD)*

DAY 4

When you accept my feelings without judgments, I feel close to you. Rejecting my feelings is rejecting me; and closing the door on me. While anyone can be critical of my thoughts and ideas, my feelings are different. They are simply and completely me. When I share them with you, then you know me as I really am.

A question for you:

*When have I experienced your acceptance of me this week?
How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)*

DAY 5

Unpleasant or difficult feelings are as important as pleasant ones. These feelings are often more difficult to share than happy feelings. When we make a commitment to give ourselves to each other we must give all of ourselves. Remember...my feelings are neither right nor wrong...because they are who I am.

A question for you:

*What feelings have I not shared with you this week because I thought you might not accept me?
How do I feel sharing this with you? (HDIFSTWY?)*

DAY 6

Three rules that verify whether I am sharing a feeling or stating a judgment.

1. *If you can replace "I feel" with "I am," then you are sharing a feeling.*
2. *When I say: I feel that, I think that, or I judge that, then I am sharing a judgment.*
3. *When I say: I feel that you, I think that you or I judge that you, then I am sharing a judgment that I have about you.*

When I make a judgment about you, or about what you do, I open the door to criticism, blame, accusation, defensiveness and arguments. This often is the beginning of a fight and I don't want to fight with you...I want to love you.

A question for you:

*Have I been critical of you or accepting of you this week?
How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)*

DAY 7

We have many things in our busy lives that we deal with daily. There is our sexual relationship, our children, the budget, the house, my job or your job...and the list goes on. The power of dialogue is not in solving the problems surrounding these areas of our lives (dialogue is not for problem solving). The power is the intimacy we gain through our daily dialogue. This allows us to communicate better when we sit down to discuss an issue. If we first share our feelings about the amount of money we have in a dialogue we are more sensitive to each other when we balance the checkbook. We can problem solve better after we learn our feelings through dialogue!

A question for you:

*What issue do we have facing us that I haven't shared my feelings with you?
What are my feelings about that issue?
Describe your strongest feeling (not the issue) in full and loving detail. (DFILD)*

Remember: Write for ten minutes.

Dialogue is not about solving problems, but sharing feelings.

CONGRATULATIONS!! YOU HAVE FINISHED YOUR FIRST WEEK OF YOUR DIALOGUE JOURNEY!!! Celebrate with each other as you strive to keep your relationship a priority through the tool of Constant Attention to your Communication.

You are now on your way to making dialogue a positive habit in your life. To help you with any questions you might be having about dialogue – remember to attend the Reunion for your Weekend.

DAY 8

Now we focus on the gift of listening. We listen in a variety of ways. There are many barriers to the way we listen. Some barriers we have are based on our fears of deeper involvement with each other. Some are based on the thought that if I listen to my spouse this way, they will expect me to change and listen like this all of the time. Most of us listen with our motor running as we don't stop what we are doing to give full attention to our spouse. Recall the listening barriers you learned in your Weekend. Although we all want to listen attentively, it is difficult for us to do because we have many old patterns and habits.

A question for you:

How well do I think I listen to you?

How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)

DAY 9

Listening goes beyond hearing the words. We are talking about listening with our hearts. We need to try to listen to experience the other person and what he (she) is feeling, not just hearing words but accepting inside of us the person we are listening to. This listening is a choice, a decision to love. Listening with our hearts enables us to experience being listened to and cared about. Listening with our hearts means allowing ourselves to be affected by what our spouse is saying and who our spouse is. Listening with our hearts isn't dependant on what is being said but the importance of who is speaking. It is making what the person is saying as important to us as it is to them.

A question for you:

How do I feel when you listen to me with your heart?

Describe the strongest feeling in full and loving detail. (DFILD)

DAY 10

We need to go beyond passive listening, to becoming an active participant in the exchange. Encourage your spouse to tell you more. Ask the questions you need answered to experience your spouse. Check back with the person you are listening to, telling him/her what you hear them saying. Avoid judgments or getting defensive. Listen to the tone-of-voice to hear the unspoken messages. Watch their non-verbal expression.

A question for you:

Do I listen better to you or to others?

How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)

WEEK TWO

...Listening, another way to say I Love You

DAY 11

We all want to be listened to whenever we speak, regardless of what we have to say, because we need to be loved and accepted. When I realize how good it feels to be listened to by you, then I am able to try to become a better listener towards you. We both can benefit from this type of listening. I feel important and special when you listen to me without judging what I am sharing with you. By listening, we build a deeper respect for each other, a sense of belonging and new closeness.

A question for you:

What kind of listener was I before our weekend?

How do I feel remembering this now?

DAY 12

On our weekend we heard the team couples sharing their feelings about death and their sexual relationship. These are only two areas that many of us have difficulty sharing our feelings. Other areas are money, in-laws, jobs, the children, just to name a few. It seems the longer we have been married the longer the list. The dynamics of sharing feelings requires that we revisit those old areas that we haven't talked about in a long time. Only this time instead of sharing thoughts and judgments we can share our feelings. I know what you think about these areas because you have told me many times. Today, I want to know how you feel. In this way we begin to regain the intimacy we once had.

A question for you:

I have difficulty sharing my feelings about ...

How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)

(Remember: your feelings are what are important here ... not the area.)

DAY 13

Sometimes our inability to listen is rooted in how we see ourselves. If we are to really listen we must free our minds of preconceived ideas or even our own opinions. That means clearing our minds and taking on an attitude of openness, even to the extent of allowing our spouse to help us form our opinion. We often prevent ourselves from doing this because it means letting go of how we see ourselves or how we think others see us. Another word for listening might be openness.

A question for you:

In what ways does my dominant personality style interfere with my listening to you?

How do I feel about that? (HDIFAT?)

DAY 14

Remember, for dialogue to work we must write. Often after a few days of dialogue we start to think that we can just sit down and talk about our feelings. Yes you can do this but not with the freedom that you have with written dialogue. Writing our feelings down on paper enables us to really focus on us without any distractions. Just like listening, sharing our feelings is a decision to love. If we are only talking, we tend to start editing our words based on how we see our spouse reacting to what we are saying. Writing our feelings down on paper avoids that distraction and that barrier. Remember your weekend and how much you opened up to each other through dialogue. All of us have so much to share with each other and you have learned a terrific way to do this...dialogue. Hang in there...you are worth it!

A question for you:

*What was a time this week, in dialogue, when I really felt listened to by you?
How do I feel about that? (HDIFAT?)*

**YOU HAVE JUST FINISHED TWO WEEKS OF DIALOGUE!
GOOD FOR YOU!
GIVE YOUR SPOUSE A HUG TODAY****Dialogue Pitfalls to Avoid**

- Getting hung up on grammar or spelling.
- “Garbage dumping” (bringing up old hurts).
- Giving “You” messages.
- Blaming, i.e., “you made me. . .” or “you didn't . . .”
- Measuring how much your spouse wrote.
- Using critical judgments.
- Interrupting while your spouse is sharing.
- Expecting your spouse to change because you shared your feelings.
- Short-changing the time together by not spending the full time talking about and continuing to draw out/explore the feeling about which you have written.

WEEK THREE

...Our Journey Together With Others

Our next tool is **Journeying with Others**. Our married life together is a journey. Journeying with others with similar values can help us stay on track to having a great marriage. Lutheran Marriage Encounter has many Communities around the world. It is not a club to join, it is a group of couples living the new lifestyle that is taught on the Weekend.

DAY 15

On our weekend they told us that if we surround ourselves with couples who have the same values we do, that it will help keep our relationship strong. It is difficult to find support for marriage in the modern world we live in today. Lutheran Marriage Encounter communities offer this for us...it is “Good Marriage Country”. It is a place where couples who love each other and want the most for their relationship and families gather to share and be supported.

A question for you:

*Who are the couples we spend time with that have the same values as we do?
How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)*

DAY 16

People invest money in a worthwhile venture. Investing our time in a worthwhile venture can be rewarding also. There are many places we can do this. We can invest our time and talents in our church community, in our town community, and in Lutheran Marriage Encounter communities. If these things are going to succeed, then we need to invest ourselves and offer our support wherever we think we need to be. Just showing up for the meetings will not be enough. We need to take an active part in the activities of the community to ensure its growth. (For Lutheran Marriage Encounter communities this means attending community meetings, or helping host a weekend, or praying for and greeting couples coming off a weekend. Our work and support will insure the continued growth of good marriages throughout the world).

A question for you:

*What area am I interested in investing our time, talents, support, and couple love?
How do I feel about that? (HDIFAT?)*

WEEK THREE

...Our Journey Together With Others

DAY 17

On our weekend we were invited to join a dialoguing community in our area. The communities are vital to supporting the Weekend and supporting other couples in dialogue. The communities can be a real source of strength for all who attend. It is a chance to experience the success and frustrations of other couples. It can also be a source of support as we try to change our lifestyles from the one offered by the modern world, separate and independent, to a life of unity. Joining a community can be a little scary. Do we want to go to a function where we don't know anyone? Do we want to share our lives with strangers? What is going to be expected of us if we do go? Do we have to be dialoguing daily to go? (All of these are normal worries about whether to attend a community or not. We can assure you the other couples will not be strangers when you leave and no one will force you to do anything. As far as daily dialogue goes, this is the purpose...to support you and for you to support others. We urge you to attend a community meeting).

A question for you:

What are my reasons for wanting to belong to the Lutheran Marriage Encounter Community?

How do I feel about that? (HDIFAT?)

DAY 18

There are barriers that can keep us from going to the regularly scheduled Community meetings. Some of these are time, finding childcare, putting work as a higher priority, tiredness, fear of the unknown, laziness, fear of sharing our feelings with others, etc. It is a choice we make as to whether or not this becomes a priority in our lives.

A question for you:

What are my barriers to going to Community?

How do I feel about that? (HDIFAT?)

DAY 19

In Community we are accepted for who we are. It doesn't matter what our age, occupation or status in life. Community is a group of couples supporting Marriage. What we share in Community is kept private. We can rely on Community for friendship, emotional, spiritual and even physical help.

A question for you:

How has Community been a support to us?

What are my feelings about that? (WAMFAT?)

WEEK THREE

...Our Journey Together With Others

DAY 20

No one dialogues alone! It can be difficult to keep dialogue as a priority if none of our friends or family is using that tool to communicate. Other LME couples can help us, teach us, and encourage us to keep dialogue a priority in our relationship.

A question for you:

What are my feelings when I realize that we have couples to support us in our decision to dialogue?

Describe feelings in full and loving detail. (DFILD)

DAY 21

Our friends in LME help us on our journey as we work to live what we learned on our weekend. If we don't continue to learn about each other and our marriage, we will just go back to where we used to be. Our Community supports us in our relationship and reminds us that we must keep our relationship a priority to be more for our children and our Church

A question for you:

Am I willing to make Community a priority in my life?

What stands in my way?

How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)

YOU HAVE COMPLETED 3 WEEKS OF DIALOGUE – Keep up the good work!

Lutheran Marriage Encounter Community has several names in different parts of the U.S. and in the world. Some of those names are: Community, Dialogue Community, Flame, Spiral and Love Circle. These names are all referring to the same thing. The Community in your area may meet weekly, bi-weekly or monthly.

Attend your local Community at least 3 times before you make a decision if it is for you.

Don't be afraid to share your dialogue successes and failures at Community – we are all there to support each other!

WEEK FOUR

...Our sexual relationship

The third tool to dialogue on is **Attention to our Sexual Relationship**. The way we respond to each other all day long is communicating our sexuality. We need to work on tenderness, playfulness, attentiveness, gentleness and romance in our relationship. All of these things and the many ways we experience each other during the day help to build a stronger sexual relationship, which is an important part of our total relationship.

DAY 22

Our sexual relationship is something that seems difficult for us to discuss. When we were falling in love, our passion was strong for each other. It may still be strong, but we may not talk about it much anymore. Talking about our sexual experiences is important for our relationship. We seem to place sex on a list of topics we think about and have strong feelings about, but we may not know how to talk about it. We seem to forget that we are communicating about ourselves, not about a thing or an activity. Intimate, trusting, open communication about and through sex is absolutely necessary for open communication in our relationship.

A question for you:

*If our lovemaking is a form of communication, how well are we communicating?
How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)*

DAY 23

Often the hurts that arise in our sexual relationship occur because of unspoken fears of rejection. While we don't expect our spouse to be perfect, we often place that expectation on ourselves especially in the areas of sexual performance and sexual attraction. Part of our growth in intimacy is dependant on us believing that our spouse loves us completely even with our imperfections.

A question for you:

*What is it about you that I find most attractive?
How do I feel sharing this with you? (HDIFSTWY?)*

WEEK FOUR

...Our sexual relationship

DAY 24

Romance is more than just doing the romantic things together like a special candlelight dinner. It is the experience of being loved and being seen as important and special. It's belonging to someone in an intimate way that allows us to meet our needs. It means being involved with one another and treating each other special all of the time.

A question for you:

When, recently, did you do something to help me feel special?

Remembering this, how do I feel?

Describe your strongest feeling in full and loving detail. (DFILD)

DAY 25

On our weekend, we realized that we had been trained very subtly for marriage by everyone we came in contact with, even the world. This training reaches into every area of our lives, particularly the area of sex. We have been shaped by many things we have heard about sex and entered marriage with certain expectations.

A question for you:

What is an attitude I had about sex entering marriage?

How do I feel sharing this with you? (HDIFSTWY?)

DAY 26

When we were dating romance came naturally for us. We did everything we could to make each other happy and wanted to be with each other all of the time...this is why we got married. As life became filled with other things, we had less and less time for us. Most of us promise we are going to regain romance in our lives; however, other things seem to keep taking up our time. I may do nice romantic things for you, but those are things **I** think are romantic. For me to really know how you like to be romanced, you must tell me.

A question for you:

How do I like to be romanced?

How do I feel sharing this with you? (HDIFSTWY?)

WEEK FOUR

...Our sexual relationship

DAY 27

As we settle into married life, there are times when we take each other for granted, we get busy with our jobs, hobbies, chores, children, family, and many of life's demands. Too often we wait for our spouse to romance us the way we romanced each other when we were dating, forgetting about the many little things they do for us. Romance can come with the love notes left in the lunch or the cup of coffee given to start the day. When there are occasions of small acts of kindness exchanged throughout the day, they are often followed with acts of romance, leading to a more passionate relationship.

A question for you:

*What do I like that you do to add romance and passion to our relationship?
How do I feel sharing this with you? (HDIFSTWY?)*

DAY 28

When we were dating all of the romantic things we did for each other made us fall in love more and more. We still need to be falling in love with each other more every day. One of the ways we can measure how much romance is in our lives is by our love making. If we are romancing each other daily then making love seems like the natural thing to do because we want to be close with each other.

A question for you:

*How do I feel about putting more fireworks into our life?
Describe feelings in full and loving detail. (DFILD)*

Our sexual relationship is a very important part of our total relationship. It can be a barometer of how we are doing. It may be one of the more uncomfortable topics to discuss. It can be helpful to use dialogue questions about our sexual relationship at least once a month to encourage open communication on this topic.

Make a commitment to have a weekly date night. It need not be expensive, but you need to take time as a couple in order to keep your sexual relationship a priority.

Another tool to help us keep our relationship a priority is **Prayer for each other, including couple prayer**. This may be a new experience for you, but one worth working toward. Studies have shown that couples who pray together, stay together. Invite God into your relationship and draw on His strength to keep your marriage strong.

DAY 29

On our weekend, we learned that God does have a plan for us. His plan for us is unity and that we are happy together. He wants us to be open to the miracle of His works and love. God wants to be a part of our marriage, but we need to invite Him in. It is easy to go about our lives and follow what the world says we should be doing, but God's plan can bring joy to our marriage.

A question for you:

*What do I think God's plan is for our marriage?
How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)*

DAY 30

For many of us, praying out loud in front of others may be a new experience. We are told in scripture – where two or more are gathered, Jesus is in our midst. If we have never prayed together as a couple, it can be difficult to get started. We won't know the benefits of praying together unless we try it. The first step to becoming comfortable is by praying silently for each other while holding hands.

A question for you:

*How do I feel about praying together with you?
Describe feelings in full and loving detail. (DFILD)*

DAY 31

We each may have a different experience of prayer. Studies have shown that couples who pray together – stay together. It's time to consider making couple prayer a priority in our lives if we haven't already done so. We may consider buying some books to help us get started. There is no right or wrong way to pray. Praying together helps us to bring God into our relationship each and every day.

A question for you:

*Do I believe couple prayer is important?
How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)*

**CONGRATULATIONS – YOU HAVE COMPLETED
YOUR FIRST MONTH OF DIALOGUE!!!
Celebrate and go out on a special date!**

DAY 32

On our weekend we heard that one special couple was praying for us all weekend. This may have been a big surprise to us. Maybe we didn't even know the couple praying for us. Consider being a prayer couple for someone else!

A question for you:

What are my feelings when I learned that a couple prayed the whole weekend for us?

Describe feelings in full and loving detail. (DFILD)

**HAVE YOU CALLED YOUR PRAYER COUPLE TO THANK THEM?
If not, you might want to do so today.**

DAY 33

For many of us, we have always considered prayer to be a very private experience. Maybe our prayers are the ones we learned as children, or maybe we just talk with God. It is common to pray when we are troubled, or when things are difficult in life, but in order to have a full relationship with God, we need to praise and thank Him every day.

A question for you:

How has my prayer life changed since our weekend?

What are my feelings about my answer? (WAMFAMA?)

DAY 34

Sometimes in our relationship there will be hurts between us. Often when this happens, we aren't sure how to heal the situation. However If God is a part of our relationship, He will carry us through even the toughest of times. This means it is me, you and God working together to make our marriage the best it can be.

A question for you:

When things are difficult in our relationship, am I willing to pray with you for God's graces to heal our hurts?

How do I feel sharing this with you? (HDIFSTWY?)

DAY 35

Our days are filled with so many important things that it can be hard to prioritize and take time for dialogue and prayer. We can have such a hectic day that we are tired and just want to fall into bed at night. It takes discipline and determination to put the important things first. When our relationship with God and each other is first, the rest of life will go more smoothly.

A question for you:

*How can we make prayer an important part of our daily lives?
How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)*

Seven Steps to Being Comfortable Praying as a Couple:

- Day 1. Pray individually- silently- for 1 minute sitting side by side.
- Day 2. Pray the Lord's Prayer together holding hands sitting side by side.
- Day 3. Each person prays aloud briefly, side by side asking God for help for friends.
- Day 4. Each person prays aloud briefly, side by side, asking God for help in your marriage.
- Day 5. Each person prays a prayer of praise to God.
- Day 6. Each person prays quietly aloud thanking god for your blessings.
- Day 7. Holding each other in your arms, pray quietly aloud thanking God for the gift of your spouse.

The intimacy you gain will make you want to pray together for the rest of your life!

Reminder – Call your prayer couple to thank them for the prayers during your weekend.

The last tool is **Re-evaluation**. This tool is actually used to find out how you are doing with the other four tools. We need to re-evaluate regularly to see if we are keeping our promises to each other. We can use our dialogue to help us re-evaluate all aspects of our life. However, remember dialogue is not to solve problems, but to share our feelings in these areas so that when we discuss them we can understand each other more fully.

DAY 36

Living in a married singles lifestyle is something that each of us has done before and can easily fall into again and again. It is more than just a series of activities that separate us physically. It is an internal, independent attitude that causes a lifestyle of “take care of me” and “satisfy my needs”, instead of concern for “you” and “your needs”. Choosing to continue living as married singles leads us to live separate and isolated lives. Remember, it is not the activity that we chose, but our attitude and why we are doing what we are doing. An example of this might be, if I am lonely because we are distant, I may seek activities to help me feel good. I choose to do “my thing”, and you can do “your thing”.

A question for you:

*In what area of my life am I living as a married single?
How do I feel about that? (HDIFAT?)*

DAY 37

When we are disillusioned in our marriage, we are feeling disappointment, loneliness, and doubt. We all go through moments of feeling this for various reasons. When we are disillusioned, we see our spouse differently. We find that the “ideal” person we married is a real person with faults and behavior annoyances that irritate us. Disillusionment from time to time is not something that goes away after we make a Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekend. But, since we have made a weekend, when we find ourselves in disillusionment we now know we don’t have to stay there...we can move on together with a decision to love.

A question for you:

*When recently have I put your needs ahead of mine?
How do I feel about that? (HDIFAT?)*

DAY 38

Sharing our feelings with each other on a regular basis can become frustrating if we are still living our same old patterns out in our lives. The goal of dialogue is to gain closeness, not to change each other. Through our experience we find acceptance and love. It is when we experience this acceptance and love that we are free to change ourselves. Remember the only one you can change is yourself. This is freeing because it allows us to love one another completely and without strings, much like we did when we first met.

A question for you:

*What changes can I make in my behavior that will help me grow closer to you?
How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)*

DAY 39

On our weekend we learned that we have a great marriage. One of the biggest obstacles is the notion that we have a good marriage already and that we don't really need to dialogue every day. For a few weeks after our weekend, our lives seemed so much better than before we made our weekend. Often the difference is only in our attitudes and willingness to talk about difficult areas in our lives by sharing our feelings with one another. Remember the success of our weekend was because we talked to each other and shared ourselves differently through our feelings, and dialogue was the tool that helped us.

A question for you:

*How do I feel about our relationship today compared to before our weekend?
How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)*

DAY 40

On our weekend we heard the call to a radical lifestyle. This is one that means making each other our priority. This means we must find a way to meet our needs through each other. Often our jobs are the source of our sense of self worth and importance. To be great couples we must keep our jobs in their right perspective. We must find our greatest sense of self worth and importance in each others eyes.

A question for you:

*What does my (your) job mean to me?
How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)*

DAY 41

On our weekend we began to focus on the ways in which we try to put each other first in our lives. We do this by the daily decision to love, in reaching out and sharing with each other, and in the changes we are making to keep our relationship top priority. It is important to recognize that it is not enough to just say “my spouse is number one”, but our daily dialogue actions should be showing this if we are truly living this out. One way in which we can put our spouse first is by getting to know each other in every way we can: our thoughts, feelings, desires, needs, hurts, likes, dislikes, etc.

A question for you:

When was a time recently when I tried to get to know you better?

How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)

DAY 42

Now that we have spent a little time remembering some old times, let’s think about us now. Ten years from now the times we have now will be memories of another time. It is up to us what kind of memories we are making. Working to make exciting romantic memories can be fun but requires us to make a decision to do just that. It also means that we need to be talking about what we enjoy most about each other.

A question for you:

What can I do this week to make memories?

How do I feel sharing this with you? (HDIFSTWY?)

In all aspects of our life it is good to re-evaluate from time to time. It is so easy to become complacent in our relationship or to allow the world to creep back in.

♥ It is important to re-evaluate how you are doing once a month or at least quarterly.

♥ Put it on your calendar so you don’t forget.

We all fall back occasionally into our old patterns and behaviors, but it is never too late to get back on track. Re-evaluation will help us to do that. Other couples from our LME Community can help us with this process also, as we challenge each other to stay on track.

WEEK SEVEN

...Remembering Our Weekend

DAY 43

Now, let's turn our attention to remembering some of the concepts we learned on our Weekend. On Friday night of our weekend we were asked to write and share with our spouse their most endearing quality. Later that night we began to learn about feelings as the Team started us on our journey to new closeness for us. It was very awkward then and most of us were unsure where all of this was going to take us. Here we are, 43 days since we left our weekend. We have come a long way!

A question for you:

Your most endearing quality is ... (share with your spouse his/her most endearing quality)

How do I feel sharing this with you? (HDIFSTWY?)

DAY 44

On our weekend there were times when most of us felt afraid, threatened or confused. There was a lot we were being asked to do and we did it! As we did, we grew closer, more trusting of each other, and fell more in love. When we left, one of the things the Presenting Team asked us to do was to take dialogue home. It hasn't always been easy but we have done it! Here we are almost 1/2 way through with our first 90 days of daily dialogue.

A question for you:

How have you benefited by choosing to dialogue at home?

What are my feelings about my answer? (WAMFAMA?)

DAY 45

On Saturday morning, in the Encounter With Self presentation, we were asked to take a close look at ourselves and how we let others see us. Sometimes we do not see ourselves as acceptable and lovable. Sometimes we present ourselves differently than we really are. Before you write your love letter, reread what you wrote about yourself in the self description from your weekend notebook.

A question for you:

How do I feel about what I wrote in my Weekend notebook?

Describe the strongest feeling in full and loving detail. (DFILD)

WEEK SEVEN

...Remembering Our Weekend

DAY 46

On our weekend, we learned that fighting is a constructive means of communication. If we have taken seriously the decision to love we can take on fighting/confrontation as an important part of communication in our relationship. All couples should fight somehow – not to hurt one another or to win but rather to strengthen their relationship. Remember the rules for fighting...No name calling...stick to the subject...no back packing (nothing over 24 hours ago should be brought up)...stay in the same room...stay physically close to each other...don't fight to win (if you do, you live with a loser) rather fight to strengthen your relationship.

A question for you:

*Which of these rules for fighting is the hardest for me to do?
How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)*

DAY 47

We were asked on our Weekend to write reflections in the form of a love letter. For many of us this was the first time in a long time (if ever) that we had written a love letter. We learned as the weekend progressed that this had a special purpose. It was a way to communicate our feelings without the distraction of seeing how our spouse was reacting to our words and it also made us more sensitive to one another.

A question for you:

*How do I feel writing a love letter to you everyday?
Describe the strongest feeling in full and loving detail. (DFILD)*

DAY 48

When we heard on Sunday morning of our weekend that we were going to write for 60 minutes and dialogue for 75 minutes, our first thought was probably disbelief. We had been sharing our feelings all weekend...how could we possibly have any more to say. Most of us were amazed at how quickly the time went by. It was one of those rare moments when we had all the time we needed to complete a thought and truly write what we were feeling. There was no one to interrupt us...no children, no phone, no schedule to keep...it was a time to focus solely on each other.

(Option: Take time to read each other what you wrote during your 60/75 love letter).

A question for you:

*What is my memory of our Extended Dialogue on Sunday of our Weekend?
How do I feel about that? (HDIFAT?)*

DAY 49

As we left our weekend we were excited about us again! There seemed to be nothing that could ever bring loneliness and isolation into our lives again. We had taken a hard look at how we had been living and we had reached out to each other. Now we were starting again and we could hardly wait.

A question for you:

What promises did we make to each other on our weekend?

How have we done with those promises?

How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)

Remembering the Concepts of our Weekend

Communicating our Feelings – We learned how to name and describe our feelings.

Encounter with Self - We took a good and honest look at who we are, and how we behave and how that affects our spouse and other people around us.

Marriage in Today's World - We learned that we had some formation, even though subtle, that told us what marriage would be about. We covered the stage of romance and disillusionment. We learned that when we make the decision to love, we can break out of our disillusionment and have joy in our relationship.

Listening – We learned about listening with the heart. We explored the obstacles to our truly listening to our spouse.

Areas for Reaching out to Each Other - We looked at ways to reach out to each other in difficult areas where we rarely talk, so we can learn more about each other.

God's Desire for Marriage - We talked about having choices about the way we live. Frequently we don't take the time or opportunity for those choices. God wants the best for us, but the choice is ours.

Risking to Trust in Dialogue - We saw how important it is to develop enough faith in our spouse's love for us. Even when we risk some of our most difficult feelings, we can still experience being accepted and loved.

Impact of Dialogue in our Daily Lives – We were asked to take dialogue home and use it daily.

Marriage as Covenant – We learned of the importance of our Covenant relationship, and learned that Marriage as Covenant is holy and important to the church.

Keeping our Relationship a Priority – We learned about the 5 tools to keep our relationship a priority and help us keep our love growing.

Sharing in the Dream – We heard about the mission of Lutheran Marriage Encounter to renew the Church and change the world.

Continuing Our Journey – We learned about the Lutheran Marriage Encounter Community that is there to help us on our marriage journey. We also heard about the importance of sharing our Couple Power with the world.

WEEK EIGHT

... We are a Sign

DAY 50

Now let's turn our attention to how we can share our love with others. Many of us didn't realize that we entered into a Covenant-love relationship on our wedding day. That adds a whole new dimension to our life together. We define our Covenant-love as an external living sign of God's love. When we are out and about our relationship is always on display. When people see us they should be reminded of God's love.

A question for you:

*What kind of sign of God's love do I think we have been this week?
How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)*

DAY 51

This concept of us being a sign of God's love puts more responsibility on us than most of us have been used to. Many of us have seen our relationship as our own private affair. Now we are being called to be something more than just two people living together. We have a mission. This is to bring God's love to everyone we come in contact with, not by preaching and teaching, but by being living examples of God's love. This means that when we are fighting we try to follow the rules. That means we must take time to listen to each other when our spouse needs it, not when it is convenient.

A question for you:

*How do I feel about us being important to the Church and the world?
Describe the strongest feeling in full and loving detail. (DFILD)*

DAY 52

Just as we are a sign of God's love, there are many couples around us who are a sign for us to see. They are couples we look up to in many ways. Maybe they have the kind of family we would like to have...life giving and joyful or maybe they have a marriage that we almost envy when we see them together. Regardless what it is, they affect our lives.

A question for you:

*What couple do I see as important to us and how have they affected our life?
How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)*

DAY 53

As we think about an involvement in our Lutheran Marriage Encounter community or another area, it is important to reflect on our Covenant-love and how we are going to live a life of sharing our love with others. We must remember that our Covenant-love keeps our life together from being our own little private affair because how we live it can have an affect on those around us.

A question for you:

How have we shared our relationship with other people in our community, church and neighborhoods this week?

How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)

DAY 54

Just like there were special people in our lives when we were children, we are special people in the eyes of our children and other children we are around. We can be a sign of God's love to them.

A question for you:

How do I feel about being a sign of God's love to our children or to other children?

Describe feelings in full and loving detail. (DFILD)

DAY 55

Recognition that we are a sign of Christ's love increases our awareness of our responsibility to be a sign of Christ's love in the world. That means not only are we called to be in love but we are also called to share our love. We did not choose Christ, He chose us. It is up to us to share our love with the world for all to see.

A question for you:

How do I think others experienced us as a sign today?

How do I feel sharing this with you? (HDIFSTWY?)

DAY 56

One of the most precious memories we can share with each other is our wedding day. We were so in love and excited about our new life together. The glow of that day carried us away to our first home together and filled us with light and happiness for a long time. As life became more complicated the glow of that day may have dimmed a little and the memory slipped to the back of our minds. We should always remember that day and all of the feelings, as this can rekindle some of our old romance. Before you write your love letter, take out your wedding album and look through it together. You may want to plan a candlelight dinner. This would be fun to do for every anniversary!

A question for you:

What is my fondest memory of our wedding day?

What feelings do I have recalling that day now?

Describe the strongest feeling in full and loving detail. (DFILD)

BEING A SIGN TO OUR FAMILY AND THE WORLD

There are many ways we can be a sign of God's love in the world. Remember – a sign is outward and visible. The opportunities are many.

- ♥ Be aware of how we talk to each other in the presence of other people. How people view marriage depends on how we treat one another in front of them.
- ♥ Treat our children with God's love. Work on parenting together - making decisions together.
- ♥ Hold hands and be close in public. Let people see that marriage is joy filled.
- ♥ Help the elderly together – maybe give an elderly person a ride to Church on Sundays.
- ♥ Teach a religious education class as a couple – give the students an example of a strong marriage.
- ♥ Present a marriage enrichment talk to other married couples in your church.
- ♥ Serve on a Church Committee together – showing the strength of a married couple working together.
- ♥ Stay together as a couple at family gatherings.
- ♥ Coach a children's sport team together as a couple.

DAY 57

Now let's focus on accepting each other's feelings. When we just tolerate each other's feelings we try to understand but don't get personally involved or let ourselves be affected by what our spouse is feeling and experiencing. We remain at the level of intellectually understanding the words or focus our attention on the topic being discussed rather than on the person. Unfortunately, this is the level at which we communicate most often. Its effects are harmony and getting along but it doesn't allow for the intimacy that is necessary if our needs are to be truly satisfied.

A question for you:

*What are two specific areas in which I tolerate your feelings and how does this generally cause me to act?
How do I feel about that? (HDIFAT?)*

DAY 58

Rejecting a person by rejecting their feelings destroys relationships and causes the person being rejected to draw away. The effects are hurt, emptiness, and isolation. Rejection is a failure to respond to a person's basic human needs for love, self worth, belonging, and autonomy. We have all done this at some time in our marital relationship and maybe not known how to avoid it. But, now we know that if we take time to listen to each other we are more sensitive with each other, and we are beginning to feel really accepted. Sure, we are still going to hurt each other sometimes, we are only human, but now we know how not to.

A question for you:

*When recently have I rejected your feelings?
How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)*

DAY 59

With many things we do, we seek support from someone else. If I go on a diet, begin an exercise plan, return to school to finish my education, try to break a habit, enter a new position at work or change careers...it helps to have support and acceptance from others. As a couple, I know there are many ways we can support each other that we do not discuss often.

A question for you:

*In what way have I felt most supported by you?
How do I feel sharing this with you? (HDIFSTWY?)*

DAY 60

A close intimate relationship is very much a matter of priority. We are the only ones who can make each other number one in our lives. We need to be able to look at each other without judgment...only with admiration and love. Sharing feelings honestly and gently can help us.

A question for you:

Why do I want to make you number one in my life?

What stands in my way?

How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)

DAY 61

When we practice acceptance of each other, we gain a new awareness of who our spouse really is right now. As we begin to accept each other more, we begin to accept those closest to us more also...our children, my family and your family, and our friends. Accepting does not mean agreeing necessarily. It simply means accepting them for the persons they are.

A question for you:

How accepting have I been of others this week?

How do I feel about that? (HDIFAT?)

DAY 62

In order to live God's plan of unity and happiness for us, we must build a relationship that is open and honest, and this will take trust. However, we are often blocked from communicating fully with our spouse because of fears. Examples of some of these fears are: the fear of intimacy – afraid we will look foolish; or if we get too close in a relationship we will lose our freedom – our own identity; the fear of commitment – afraid to make promises we won't be able to follow up on; the fear of disappointment – afraid we will invest more than our spouse and reveal our real feelings and our spouse will not; or afraid to get our hopes up and then be shattered if our spouse backs away.

A question for you:

Where do I feel most alone in our relationship?

How well have I communicated this to you?

How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)

DAY 63

We spend much of our time together talking about all the things in our life...our children, the budget, our jobs, our home, our schedules. Usually all of these types of discussions are an exchange of our ideas, opinions, or maybe just facts. When we sit down to dialogue it is a good chance to share our feelings and to make contact with one another in a very real and personal way. It is a form of communication that puts on an equal plane no matter what the topic is because we are simply sharing our feelings.

A question for you:

What is the one thing that I like most about our dialogue time together?

What are my feelings about this? (WAMFAT?)

Remember: Feelings are neither right nor wrong ... they just are.

There are basic ways we react to what our spouse communicates to us about themselves. They are: Rejection, Toleration, and Acceptance. The goal of dialogue is acceptance, but to get there we must first look at how we practice rejection and toleration in our relationship.

Trust: Having confidence in my spouse's love for me.

Risk: Deciding to go beyond my obstacles and fears and become vulnerable to my spouse.

Trust is a state of mind, Risk is taking action.

DAY 64

Now we turn our attention to how dialogue can shape our priorities. As we are growing closer with each other through dialogue, we still find we sometimes argue over the same things. We may have expected to see a change in this area by now and have not. For us to grow closer and understand how we each need to personally change ourselves for the sake of our relationship, it is important to also share our values with each other. Remember dialogue is not for solving problems, but to understand each other better.

A question for you:

*Are we using dialogue to share our feelings and grow in intimacy?
What are my feelings about this? (WAMFAT?)*

DAY 65

Sometimes there are so many demands on us that there is no time left for us. It seems there is always one more thing to do and one more place to go. Part of our examination of our lives involves evaluating how we are spending our time. Often the things that are the most important to us are the things we give the least amount of time to...like our marriage. Sometimes we allow our dialogue to fit into an already full schedule and when something unexpected comes up; our dialogue doesn't get prime time.

A question for you:

*What does the way I spend my time tell me about my priorities?
Am I spending my time on what I value the most?
How do I feel sharing this with you? (HDIFSTWY?)*

DAY 66

We all must work for a living. For many couples today that involves both spouses working. We set high standards for our lifestyle. Often those standards are based on decisions we made early on in our marriage. As we begin to look at our life together now, we need to re-evaluate what is important to us and what value all those things we work so hard for have for us.

A question for you:

*Have our decisions changed over the years about what is most important to us?
How do I feel sharing this with you? (HDIFSTWY?)*

DAY 67

An important item on a list of values for many couples with children is their activities. There is a world of activities for young people today and they take up large amounts of times. Many of them are very good for our children and help form them for adulthood. Often the price we as parents pay is great. Evening activities may dictate whether or not we have an evening meal together as a family, or just grab something on the run. Schedules have to be figured out and we find ourselves racing to meet a deadline.

A question for you:

Are activities our children are involved in taking away from our couple relationship?

What are my feelings about this? (WAMFAT?)

DAY 68

Our lovemaking seems to be a casualty of busy schedules also. We are often so tired when we go to bed that sleep is the only thing on our mind. Lovemaking is no longer spontaneous but something we have to plan and fit into our schedule.

A question for you:

Where do I place our time for making love on my list of priorities?

How do I feel sharing this with you? (HDIFSTWY?)

DAY 69

The area of in-laws is often a difficult one to discuss. Over the years we may have had situations that either with my parents or your parents have caused us pain. We often find ourselves torn and do things your way, my way, or their way to ease the friction. What about us? What about our family...you, me, and our children? Where is our priority? Are things always going to be dictated to us by your family or my family? Our families are important to both of us and we love them very much...but our family, our children, our relationship, you and me, are important also!

A question for you:

How do I feel when we are torn between our families?

Describe the feeling in full and loving detail. (DFILD)

DAY 70

Daily dialogue is no easy task. If it were, then every couple leaving a weekend would dialogue every day for the rest of their lives. Because of our humanness and the pressures we face in life, many of us slip away from dialogue after our weekend because we see it as one more thing to do. Is our relationship something we can let go of, or do we really want to grow closer each day?

A question for you:

*What sacrifices am I willing to make for our daily dialogue?
How do I feel sharing this with you? (HDIFSTWY?)*

Remember: Dialogue is to experience (not understand) how our spouse feels about some area in life.

Stick to sharing feelings, and not to discussion.

Remember: Write for ten minutes.

Dialogue is not about solving problems, but sharing feelings.

Prime time

Choose a time to write that is best for you. This time does not have to be the same time for both spouses, but it has to be a time when you are able to write for a full 10 minutes without interruption. When you dialogue, choose a time when you both have 10 uninterrupted minutes for describing and discussing your feelings.

Eliminate Distractions

It is impossible to share deeply in our letters or in our verbal dialogue if we are distracted by TV, phones, children and other outside influences.

DAY 71

Now our attention turns to our Lutheran Marriage Encounter organization. In 1967 the first Marriage Encounter Weekend was held at Notre Dame University. It was presented to seven couples and a few priests. The couples and priests in the early years of Marriage Encounter had a desire to make the weekend available to all married couples. Together with the help of the Catholic church Lutheran Marriage Encounter was introduced in major cities around the United States. These initial couples dreamed, sacrificed and worked hard to spread the Weekends. Today, there are Lutheran Weekends being held around the world in over 80 countries!

A question for you:

When I think of all the couples and priests who made it possible for the Weekend to be available for us, I feel ...

Describe the feeling in full and loving detail. (DFILD)

DAY 72

Most businesses have a mission statement. In order to know what their focus is, they look to their mission statement. What is the focus of our marriage? Do we have a mission statement for it? It is time for us to create our mission statement for our marriage and for our family. *Take 10 minutes to create a mission statement.*

A question for you:

How do I feel knowing that we as a couple have a mission for our marriage?

How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)

DAY 73

The Mission of Lutheran Marriage Encounter is a ministry dedicated to assisting married couples to live intimate and responsible relationships by providing an Encounter Weekend experience as well as ongoing community support. Our Vision statement: The Lutheran Church renewed and our world changed through strengthened couple relationships and stronger personal relationships with Christ. To renew the Church through stronger personal relationships with Christ Sounds like a big job at first, but when we think of what many couples both Lay and Clergy have done already, we can see it is attainable. But it takes couples like us to keep it going! We are the only ones who can tell our families and friends about Marriage Encounter and invite them to go. We are the only ones who know who they are, and the only ones who can share with them what the Weekend has done for our relationship..

A question for you:

How do I feel about inviting others to experience a Weekend?

How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)

DAY 74

It takes a lot of work to make a Marriage Encounter Weekend happen. There are many things we can do to help and support the Weekends. We could be a prayer couple, greet couples on a Friday night, help out by giving Temple talks, or join a community that works together to support the Weekend. All of this is done by loving volunteer couples who want to do their part to help keep the weekends going.

A question for you:

What are we going to do to help make Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekends available for other couples?

How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)

DAY 75

Just like we probably never thought much of the importance of our Covenant - love we probably never thought about the importance of our couple power. We know we have individual power, but the thought of couple power is something new. When we take our individual power and combine them, the sum is something bigger than both of us...this is couple power!

A question for you:

What talents do we have as a couple? Where can we share our couple power?

How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)

DAY 76

Although the weekend continues to spread all over the world, there are couples in our church and neighborhoods who have not made the Weekend or even heard about it. For the Weekend to continue to reach couples in our town, couples like us must dare to dream for the future. We cannot be satisfied with how things are, but rather we must dream for how they can be. Our children are growing up fast in a stressful modern world. The Weekend can do a lot to change the direction for things in our church's and neighborhoods for couples looking for intimacy in their marriages.

A question for you:

What dreams do I have for Lutheran Marriage Encounter in our city or area?

How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)

DAY 77

The first part of our dream is to simply dare to dream BIG. The tough part comes in taking on the responsibility of making those dreams come true. Anyone can say “I wish ...” but commitment is required to make dreams come true. Whether our dream is for Lutheran Marriage Encounter or not is not the issue. The issue is that we are important to the world...the world needs us. Sure, we can sit back and think, “they don’t mean us ...” but they do! The world needs us to dream and commit to make our dream come true.

A question for you:

How do I feel about being needed by others?

Does our church need us as a couple to share our talents with other parishioners?

Describe feelings in full and loving detail. (DFILD)

WEEK TWELVE

...Our Dreams for the Future

DAY 78

Now let's dream together! On our weekend we had strong feelings when we wrote the extended dialogue on Sunday morning. For many of us, it had been a long time since we talked about our future and of dreams for our time together. Dreaming together was so natural when we were dating and in our early years of marriage, but all of the stress, pressures and realities of life seemed to strip away our dreams. As long as we can dream together, let's not waste one day or one moment and fail to dream about us again. Let us first look at how we might be and hope to be...instead of how we are.

A question for you:

*What about our lives would I like to change and how do I wish we could be?
How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)*

DAY 79

When we were married we dreamed about how many children we would like to have and hoped and prayed they would be healthy. We had many hopes and dreams for them. After the realization of all the work it is to raise children, our dreams may have faded as we spent all our energy in raising them. Maybe our dreams faded when they grew up and left home. Maybe our dream faded when we discovered we could not have any children.

A question for you:

*What were the dreams we had for our children?
How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)*

DAY 80

We spend time talking about all that we need to do to assure our needs are taken care of when we grow old. We are practical about things like the modern world tells us to be. While this is good, what are my dreams for us in our retired years? Like we planned our lives together when we were engaged, are we planning our future together now?

A question for you:

*What are my dreams for us when we grow old?
How do I feel sharing this with you? (HDIFSTWY?)*

WEEK TWELVE

...Our Dreams for the Future

DAY 81

As our communication is improving and we begin tearing down the barriers that kept us apart, our relationship with our children and with the rest of our family is changing also. There is new family spirit emerging (whether you have children or not). We are aware that this only a beginning of a closer relationship with our children and our family.

A question for you:

What family spirit and atmosphere do I dream of for our home?

How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)

DAY 82

Since we are dreaming, let's dream about our sexual relationship. Not fantasies, but rather the realities of what we would like our sexual relationship to become. We all have thoughts, hopes, desires, and dreams of what we would like our sexual relationship to be, but we don't spend time sharing these with each other. The first part of making dreams come true is sharing them with each other.

A question for you:

What are my dreams for our sexual relationship?

How do I feel sharing this with you? (HDIFSTWY?)

DAY 83

Often we think we have to do something big, like go off to Africa or India to do anything great for the world. One of the greatest mission fields in the world is located in our very own neighborhoods. We have all seen the pain of divorce and that may leave us feeling helpless. We have all seen neighbors and friends troubled with teenagers and we feel helpless. When others in our church family and friends lose their jobs we feel helpless. What can we possibly do? Finding our way to help and support those around us requires us to dream about what we can do together.

A question for you:

What dreams do I have for our hurting friends at our church or neighborhood?

How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)

Day 84

There are so many places for us to spend our couple love. The world is waiting for us and needs us. Maybe it is with troubled teenagers or the homeless. Maybe it is taking care of a couple's children so they can have a romantic night out together. We have to remember we can't just look at how things are, but rather how they might be.

A question for you:

What dreams do I have for a better world?

How do I feel sharing this with you? (HDIFSTWY?)

*Now that you have completed 12 weeks of dialogue, you may want to try **Family Dialogue**.*

1. Teach your children about feelings. Encourage them to share their feelings and that feelings are neither right nor wrong.
2. Give them the list of feeling words and helpful hints to describe feelings.
3. The younger children can draw pictures to describe their feelings and then describe the picture to the family.
4. You should not use family dialogue more than once per week. Choose a question for the whole family. Let them write for 10 minutes and then gather together and let everyone read their letter out loud.
5. Listen with patience and do not judge their feelings. Do not try to pacify or criticize their feelings.
6. Choose one person's feeling to share about. Try to understand the feeling fully. Don't interrogate, but gently ask questions until you can empathize with the feeling. You will not have time to share on everyone's feeling.
7. Set the time and place for the next family dialogue.
8. Enjoy your time together as a family!

WEEK THIRTEEN

...Continuing Our Journey Together

Note: Each day this week after your dialogue, each of you write 2 questions for a future dialogue. Cut them apart, fold them up, and put them in a jar or box for future dialogues.

DAY 85

As we begin our last week of dialogues in this booklet, we can take pride in all the different things we have discussed and the feelings we have shared with each other. We have learned so very much about each other through the many different feelings we have shared together. Looking back, there is one in particular that has meant the most to me. (Take time to really think about what your spouse has shared that meant the most to you).

A question for you:

*Which of our dialogue questions has been very significant to me?
How do I feel sharing this with you? (HDIFSTWY?)*

When writing your 2 dialogue questions for the jar, think about - *Which dialogue questions would I like to use again?*

DAY 86

Our dialogue is strengthening many areas of our relationship. It is important for our continued growth to take time to reflect on how we see ourselves growing closer.

A question for you:

*What area of our relationship has dialogue strengthened the most?
How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)*

Don't forget to write your two dialogue questions each for the jar.

DAY 87

It is important to remember that feelings are neither right nor wrong. We don't have to justify our feelings and we don't have to apologize for our feelings. Sharing them with each other simply gives us an opportunity to grow closer to each other. Our goal is acceptance of one another ...unity.

A question for you:

*How has your writing a love letter to me each day affected our relationship?
How do I feel sharing this with you? (HDIFSTWY?)*

Dialogue Question suggestion: *Write questions about areas you most need to share your feelings.*

WEEK THIRTEEN

...Continuing Our Journey Together

DAY 88

There are common areas we married couples often avoid. By not discussing or sharing our feelings in these areas, we create barriers between us. The most common areas are finances, in-laws, sex, children, death, and religion.

A question for you:

In what area is difficult for me to share my feelings?

What are my feelings in this area?

Describe the strongest feeling in full and loving detail. (DFILD)

DAY 89

God made us all good, lovable, and unique. “*I am fearfully, wonderfully made*” (*Psalm 139: 14*). This is a statement of hope, for no matter how I can see myself; I am created good and lovable in God’s eyes. On that foundation, I can have the courage to choose to make the changes in my behavior and attitude to reveal the real me that God made...that He wants to reveal to the world.

A question for you:

When God made me, what do I think were His dreams for me?

How do I feel about my answer? (HDIFAMA?)

Dialogue question suggestion: *Questions about our personality styles, our weaknesses, and our strengths can be good for our dialogue.*

DAY 90

We have completed our first 90 days of dialogues. At times it has been difficult and yet at times we have experienced great joy. We have laughed together and we have cried together and we have grown closer in only 90 days. I am looking forward to continuing to grow closer to you and loving you more.

A question for you:

What are my hopes and dreams for us through our continued dialogue?

How do I feel sharing this with you? (HDIFSTWY?)

Dialogue question suggestion: *Questions about our commitments to our relationship through dialogue are always good.*

WEEK THIRTEEN

...Continuing Our Journey Together

- ♥ When you have finished this dialogue, select your question for the next day from the questions you have written this week.
 - ♥ Congratulations on completing your first 90 days of dialogue. We hope you will continue as we have. Daily dialogue is the key to a growing relationship and a great marriage. May God bless you.
-

Celebrate – You have completed your first 90 days of dialogue!!!

Keep inviting others to attend future weekends in your area.

Offer yourselves to support an upcoming weekend. Being a prayer couple for another couple on the weekend is always a gift that you might to give.

Call the presenting Team couples from your weekend, and let them know what dialogue has done for your relationship!

Get the LME Calendar which has a dialogue question for every day of the week. You should be able to get this through your local Community.

Attend your monthly Community meeting. It will help you stay on track with dialogue.

You may want to speak with your pastor and discuss what you can do together as a couple to help him improve marriages in your parish.

Dialogue question web sites:

<http://www.godlovesmarriage.org>

<http://www.ilme.org>

You can receive a daily dialogue question by following eMatrimony on Twitter.

You can also share yourselves with others in the global LME community by joining the LME group on Facebook.

About the WEDS Manual

The WEDS Manual was designed for use by the Catholic expression of Worldwide Marriage Encounter in the United States and comes to Lutheran Marriage Encounter as a gift from the Catholic community. The WEDS Manual was received with much enthusiasm in 1994 when introduced in its Lutheran version to our North American Region by Dennis & Becky Lucero. It was printed and distributed by many Lutheran Marriage Encounter communities, using various reproduction methods and formats.

The response showed that it was indeed a valuable dialogue resource. As a result, in February, 1995, the NAR Board agreed that it should be in the hands of as many encountered couples as possible. The decision was made to publish it as a special issue of "Call to be family" which would reach all current CTBF subscribers. (CTBF publication is no longer available) Additional copies were printed to be made available at the 1995 International Reunion, for distribution to local communities, and for ILME Weekend packets.

In early 1996, and again in September, 2000, The WEDS Manual was revised by Russ and Ann Hillman. Again in February, 2011 the Manual was revised by Ralph & Judi Golnick. For individual copies, please contact your local Supply Couple. For larger quantities please contact the Lutheran Marriage Encounter. Supply couple

