

ENCOUNTER WITH SELF -- 48.5 Min.

OBJECTIVE:

To help the participants take a realistic look at the way they try to present themselves to others; to help them get in touch with their self-doubts and how these self-doubts limit their relationships.

GENERAL FORMAT:

To know: the way we present ourselves (our behavior) has a definite effect on our spouses; with very few exceptions, we all have a poor self-image; God created me as good, lovable and unique.

To do: exercises that help them understand their patterned behavior and take an honest look at themselves.

To experience: a sense of who they are; recognition of their own self-doubts; a desire to make a choice to grow in their relationship this weekend.

WHERE ARE THE COUPLES?

After breakfast; it's a new day; probably haven't slept well -- strange bed. When we begin discussing personality styles, remember that the participants have varying degrees of education and varying experiences of Myers-Briggs and other self-evaluation methods. The material should be presented clearly and simply.

I. **Introduction** (CL: 0.5 min.)

“The title of this presentation is ‘Encounter With Self.’ The key concept in this talk is ‘Understanding who I am, what I do and how these affect my relationships.’ We’re on page 11 in the workbook. Last night we explored ways to enrich our marriages by using a new communication process. In this talk we will learn that it is essential to know and understand ourselves. We will spend time discovering our dominant personality styles and the effects of our behaviors and self-doubts on our spouses. We do all this to increase our capacity for intimacy.”

II. **Typical ways we try to present ourselves** (LH or LW: 13 min. total)

A. Personality Styles Exercise, in place. Introduce, review instructions.

B. Give them 8 minutes to do exercise and total the columns.

C. Give them 4 minutes to read about the four styles and discuss between themselves.

In presenting this section, be careful not to use the words "quiz" or "test" as those words can arouse anxiety in some. Explain the exercise. Call attention to the directions in the workbook and go over them before doing the exercise. Tell participants if they have questions, they can raise their hands and a presenter will come to assist them. Finish giving directions by reminding them "4 is most like you, 1 is least like you."

***Note:** If anyone asks how much time is allowed, let one of the other presenters answer him/her individually. If you think it's helpful to the couples, you can tell them when the time is about half over.*

After the couples complete the exercise or when you see that nearly all are finished, tell them to total the columns. Tell them that in Marriage Encounter we use four personality styles; name them. State that each of us has some of each one of these styles. However, one style is dominant. That style is represented by the highest total. Have them read the personality styles as well as the descriptions in the workbook. Give them time to discuss the results of their personality style assessments with each other.

*Don't cut the exercise time short. It is **critically important** that the participants be done with the exercise before moving on. When giving the instructions to total the columns, tell those who aren't done to finish up the exercise first.*

We need to watch the group and be attentive to whether or not everyone is done with the exercise. If some of the participants aren't done, they will be lost for the rest of the talk and it will affect the rest of their weekend if they don't identify their personality style. However, if someone chooses not to fill out the exercise, we need to let go of that and not make an issue of it.

III. The way I try to present myself to others (24.5 min. total)

A. The difference between personality styles and behaviors

(LH or LW: 1.5 min.)

1. Give definitions.

Tell participants we will explain difference between personality style and behavior. Our working definition of a personality style is, "My personality style is the essence of who I am and how I appear to other people. It reflects my identity, becoming more apparent from childhood through adulthood. It is reflected in the things I say, my reactions to the way I perceive and respond to persons, places and events around me. It embodies my personal beliefs, goals, expectations, hopes and fears." Our working definition of behavior is, "My behavior is a learned and adaptable manner of presenting myself to win approval, gain respect or accomplish another end. My behaviors may be different depending on whether the setting is work, home or play. My behaviors also have been learned over a lifetime, but as opposed to my personality style, they are much more subject to adaptation and change. Behaviors can be learned as well as unlearned." You do not have to use the entire definitions in your talk. A summary of main points can be used.

2. Give examples to illustrate the difference between personality style and behavior.

In order to teach these concepts, use examples. Consider the following:

The personality style is like a house and behavior is like its decorations. A house may be a two-story, a ranch, or a split-level. It will always be that form or style. However, it can be painted different colors; the furnishings can be modern, country, or antique; the landscaping can be formal gardens or weeds. Other examples could be music and its various classifications (classical, rock, jazz, blues, rap, country, etc.) which are like personality style, and the different songs or compositions are like behavior; or consider gardens of different types (such as vegetable, rose, rock)-- the personality styles -- and what is planted in them -- behavior. In the examples it would be good to expand on one idea (like houses and decoration) and then give another quick idea (like gardens, music or other). Here you can tell them that just as feelings are neither right nor wrong, in the same way our personality style is not right or wrong. It is the behavior that can be right or wrong.

It is critical to understand how to describe the difference between personality style and behaviors. If this is unclear, discuss it with your workshop couple before you write it. If this section isn't explained well in the talk, the participants will be lost.

Time:

The time given on the outline may not be long enough. In order to summarize the definitions from the workbook and then give one good example and one or two brief examples more time may be needed. However, III.B. has more time than is needed. Just make sure the total of Section III. is not over time.

What we are trying to convey is that our personality style is a broad description of who we are. It doesn't change from moment to moment or day to day. In other words, I am who I am. However,

my behaviors change often, and I can choose to behave in certain ways. In general, though, our behaviors will reflect what we value, seek, etc.

Here is an example of how this section can be written. If the examples used do not clearly identify the difference between personality style and behavior, then it needs to be rewritten.

"To help you understand the distinction between a personality style and the behaviors, I will give you an analogy. If I were to ask you what type of house you live in, you would tell me it was a ranch, a tri-level, a colonial, etc. That gives me a broad picture of your house, which will rarely if ever change. If your home is a tri-level, it will always be a tri-level. The style of your home could be compared to a personality style. But for me to really get a picture of what your house is like, you would need to tell me what kind of cabinets your kitchen has, whether the bedrooms are wallpapered or not, the color of carpet, the type of furniture you have, etc. This is a more detailed description of your home and things that you can and will change. The decorations, color of carpeting, etc., can be likened to the behaviors.

*"Well, in the same way in describing who you are, you might say you are an outgoing, friendly person -- one who values relationship, a helper -- that is your dominant personality style. It is a broad picture of **who you are** and in general won't change. But in order to know you in a better way, I would need to find out the many ways you behave -- what are the **things you do**. You may tell me that you take time to listen to your friends' troubles and desires, that when there is conflict you work to make peace. Your behaviors can and will change depending on the situation -- but most often will still be consistent with your personality style."*

*Personality style and behavior are not interchangeable words. My behavior is not because of my personality style. The **motivation** for my behavior comes from my personality style. I should not be excusing my behaviors "because of" my personality style.*

B. Identify and describe my dominant personality style.

(LH, LW, CL & CS: 2.25 min. each)

*The husband starts this section with a **transition statement** that includes that each of us is a blend of all four personality styles. However, we have a dominant personality style. **When each Presenter refers to his/her style, he/she needs to say "dominant."***

Use a brief personal sharing to name and describe your dominant personality style. To develop this section, ask yourself and complete the following questions or statements: What do I seek? What affirms me? What brings me down? I like to . . . I tend to . . . What do I value? If you have trouble selecting a dominant style, use the style that is dominant in your spousal relationship.

This section minimizes the behaviors I have and talks about the personality traits. These traits can be pulled from the description of the personality styles in the workbook and some parts of the personality style exercise. There needs to be a clear separation in III.B. and III.C. of the personality style and the behaviors.

It is helpful for the couples writing this talk to do the personality styles exercise for their spouses and then compare notes.

*In this talk, we are **not** writing a self-description, which is very complete and encompasses all of who we are. In this presentation, with the recognition that people are made up of a blend of the 4 personality styles, we are focusing only on the **dominant** personality style. When we write this description, we will emphasize that dominant style. We realize that, by doing this, we will be leaving out those traits of the other 3 styles that are "me" because it may confuse the participants on the weekend.*

NOTE: *If the husband and wife both have the same dominant personality style and this is verified in workshopping, and if one spouse has a **very close** second personality style, it would be good for him/her to write on the 2nd style, as long as all the talks follow that style.*

If 3 or all 4 of the presenting couples giving this talk have the same dominant style, that is okay. The descriptions will be different, and it will show that even though we use the same category name, we still are unique individuals. Also, because all the presenters share their personality styles throughout the weekend, the other presenting couples will illustrate the other styles.

When writing this section, the tendency is to include some behaviors. This section should not have behaviors in it. This is about "who I am." It answers the questions of "What do I value, seek; what affirms and disaffirms me?" There is no need to include explanations that would talk about behaviors.

C. Share examples of my typical behaviors.

(LH, LW, CS & CL: 3.5 min. each)

(C & D given together by each; C., 2.5 min. & D., 1 min.)

We switch gears. Keeping in mind your personality style, the talk now focuses on behaviors. To write this section, look at the behaviors on the personality style assessment you completed and expand on them in your own words.

1. The ways in which my behaviors developed

*Lay husband begins with a **transition statement** introducing behaviors. We use these behaviors to win praise and be successful, to deflect criticism and even to avoid punishment. You may wish to use examples of behavior from your childhood, adolescence and adult life in which you wanted to gain attention, to belong, to gain acceptance and to be liked. The development of our behavior is an on-going process even today.*

For the development of our behaviors, it is not necessary to give a childhood, adolescent, adult example as in the past outline -- although if it works, they can be used. If you use the above examples, it should not just be a stroll down memory lane talking about when you grew up. This needs to be a sharing of the behaviors you used at these stages in your life in order to best be in control, gain acceptance, or protect yourself in a manner that was comfortable within your personality style. For clarity and teaching purposes, the examples you use in this section should mesh with the dominant personality style you shared in III.B. The examples used should not be written as if our environment and past experiences caused our behaviors. Rather, the focus is that because of the person I am, in this situation, this is how I behaved.

For example, for the helper as a child it was natural to be friendly and good. This behavior gained acceptance and affirmed the behaviors. In high school, the helper was everybody's friend, keeping the peace and giving advice. The helper wants to be liked by most people. Social skills are more important than competitive activities. As an adult, the helper most likely is in a profession where they work with people, perhaps children. They tend to get involved in activities and jobs where social skills are important. Being with people is more important than accomplishing things.

Our behaviors are motivated by the desire to control our environment. The helper generally controls through relationship, the organizer generally controls through order, the catalyst generally controls through innovation and motivation, and the thinker generally controls by analysis and process.

We can discover some of our behaviors by using the personality style exercise sheet and by reviewing the description of personality styles. It is also good to ask our spouses. We need to include some examples of our everyday behaviors. They don't need to be long stories, just brief examples.

CAUTION:

Be very careful to avoid "blaming" any of your behaviors on your personality style.

The title (i.e. helper, thinker, organizer) of your dominant personality style doesn't mean the examples you share should all include helping, thinking, organizing.

In the examples of behaviors for the helper personality style it's important that we don't overemphasize **helping** activities. The helper personality style is motivated by values such as loyalty, friendship, relationship, etc. The behaviors need to match those things.

The organizer personality style shouldn't be sharing only examples of organizing activities. The organizer personality style is motivated by values such as stability, order, security, clarity, etc.

Likewise, the thinker personality style shouldn't only share behaviors that are thinking activities. The thinker personality style is motivated by values such as consistency, correctness, logic, etc.

The catalyst personality style should not exclusively share behaviors that sound outrageous. Change, freedom, creativity, etc., motivate the catalyst personality style.

2. Positive and negative effects of my behaviors on my spouse

The focus of the sharing is the effect of your behavior on your spouse. Begin by stating that some of your behaviors have a positive effect on your spouse. Then share specific examples. Then do the same with negative effects: share specific examples of how your behavior has a negative effect on your relationship. It's not necessary to use the same behavior for both examples.

Opposites often attract, so it's common for two people with dissimilar personality styles to marry. Our predominant behaviors are often what attracted us to each other in the first place. Often they become the source of many of our frustrations, disagreements and disappointments with each other. **Under stress or in an argument my instinctive behaviors become most evident.**

In writing this section, make sure this isn't a repetition of the personality traits. This again would confuse the participants. There is a definite separation between who I am and what I do. We tell them that our personality styles are neither right nor wrong but our behaviors can be judged as right or wrong. If that is true, **when we start sharing the section on behaviors and confuse it by saying things like "my personality style has a negative effect on our relationship," then we are giving the wrong message.** It is our behaviors that have the negative and positive effect, and we have a choice as to the behaviors we use on a day-to-day basis.

D. The "me" I don't want others to see.

In writing this section, **do not include behaviors.** Briefly contrast what you do let others see of you versus what you choose not to reveal. Identify and share vulnerabilities, insecurities, fears and feelings surrounding this. Then share the negative effects of keeping this hidden from your spouse. (Don't say something like "hiding the real me.")

1. Share specific vulnerabilities or weaknesses that I keep hidden.

This should be a difficult section to share. We are asking the presenting couples to share something that "I don't want others to see about me." This should be filled with the feelings that

go on inside when we think about these vulnerabilities and weaknesses and when we share them with others.

When we speak of vulnerability, we are talking about something that we fear that others will use to take advantage of us, attack us, or misjudge us. When we get down to the core of the onion, we've peeled off all the outer layers and get to the vulnerability.

*We all have insecurities about some aspects of our lives. This section of the talk asks the participants to look inward to get in touch with the feelings they experience when they have not lived up to their own or others' expectations. **In describing the parts of ourselves that we keep private or hidden, it is important to share feelings.** An example: at work it may be important to be seen as decisive, yet we may agonize over each action, consumed by a feeling of inadequacy. We may shut ourselves off from others or be afraid to ask for advice or counsel. The intent in this section is to convey that each of us is self-critical or sees a part of who we are as someone unacceptable or inappropriate. We should not share an incident of abuse or trauma that may not be relatable and may, in fact, detract.*

2. Share the negative effects when I keep this “me” hidden.

What you should be sharing here is not the effects on your spouse of what it is about you that you keep hidden; rather, it is the effect on your spouse because you do not share this with him/her. The result of not sharing these vulnerabilities and insecurities is that you do not allow your spouse to know all of who you are, and it becomes difficult to have total intimacy. Your spouse can not understand why you react the way you do to certain situations when he/she doesn't know what is going on inside of you.

IV. How self-doubts limit me and my relationships (6.5 min. total)

A. Begin with a transition to introduce this section. Then read narrative of “The Prince and the Rose” to illustrate how self-doubts limit our relationships.

(CS: A. & B., 3 min.)

Give an introductory statement that the narrative we are about to read illustrates how self-doubts limit our relationships. Tell the couples to turn to page 16 in the workbook. Read the narrative.

B. "Not all of us are proud, vain and arrogant, but each of us has a part of ourselves that we see as unlovable. Deep within every soul there is a rose, the good qualities God planted in us at birth. It grows amid the thorns of our weaknesses and faults. Many of us look at ourselves and see only the thorns, the ugliness. We despair, thinking that nothing good can possibly come from us. The prince couldn't understand how anyone could possibly see past his ugliness, let alone love him. Our relationships with our spouses are also affected by the way we see ourselves. When we doubt ourselves, we limit our ability to give or receive love."

C. Share my self-doubts and how they relate to what I heard in the narrative. Also share how these self-doubts have limited my relationship with my spouse.

(CL & LH or LW: 1 min. each)

Share your self-doubts, relating your sharing to “The Prince and the Rose.” It is not necessary to quote a particular line, as long as reference to the story is clear. Be specific about what your self-doubts are. Sum up at the end and point to the focus of this sharing as how doubting yourself limits your ability to give and receive love.

*This section is about self-doubts. It is not about the prince, or how I see myself as a beast; it is about the self-doubts I have that keep me from a relationship, especially with my spouse. The narrative is just used to show how we can lock ourselves up in our castles because we doubt our goodness. The self-doubts need to be the focus! The key point is that in order to love another I must discover the goodness within myself, which includes self-forgiveness. **The sharing should not be focused on physical appearance or attributes.***

D. Superiority also affects this relationship (relate to arrogant, selfish Prince in The Prince and the Rose).

(Other lay spouse: 1.5 min.)

Briefly explain superiority, referring to the Prince in the narrative. Explain that we all have superiorities, then share a personal example of a superiority you have and how it affects your relationship. Usually, we build up superiorities to hide our own inferiorities.

*The concept of superiorities is very important to our weekend journey for it is our superiorities which keep us self-involved and therefore unable to meet our needs. By superiorities we **don't** mean things at which we think we are better or more skillful, such as math or sports. The superiority we are talking about here is where **I think I am a better person** than my spouse because of a judgment that I make about myself. It is an attitude that I have.*

An example of superiority should be shared here. It is best to choose something that is relatable to the group. For instance, "I believe that I can relay information better than my husband. What I often do is get on the other extension when he is on the phone and I take over the conversation and tell the necessary information. I don't trust he will get it right. I portray a superior attitude and put him down when I do this."

When you are describing your superiority, try to point out what inferiority you see in yourself that you are trying to hide or compensate for. For example, a thinker might pride him/herself on using logic in all situations while secretly doubting his/her ability to empathize as well as his/her helper spouse.

V. Some other ways to find out more about how I see myself

(LH or LW: 1.5 min.)

A. Compliments, how we reject them at times

*Begin with a **transition statement** based on "Some other ways to find out more about how I see myself." One spouse (usually the one with the poorest self-image) introduces and discusses, noting that we tend to minimize compliments, and describes internal and external reactions. Give a specific example about a compliment on an inner quality, not a behavior or a physical attribute.*

B. How I use a double standard

Teach and explain how we tend to use a double standard when we judge ourselves. For me to accept a virtue in myself, it is something that I have to see in me on an ongoing basis – it needs to be there all the time. But for me to accept a weak point in myself, I need to see it only occasionally. If someone (especially my spouse) comments on a fault I have, I don't forget it, and I accept it as being true even if it shows up very rarely. Give an example.

VI. God created me good, lovable and unique.

A. Introduce and read Isaiah 43:1-4 (CL: 1 min.)

B. Choosing to believe in the "me" God sees (LH or LW: 1 min.)

Focus of this sharing should be on God's love for us in spite of the weaknesses and vulnerabilities we try to hide. We have led the participants down some rather depressing paths as we shared our

self-doubts and low self-esteem; now comes the celebration! Make this section full of joy and reassurance! Like a parent who loves his child in spite of his wrongdoing, God sees us as "precious" and "honored."

VII. Invitation to make a choice: (LH or LW: .5 min.)

Advise the couples of the choices they can make now and as the weekend progresses. Focus here is on the participants, not the presenters. Challenge them to make the choice to believe in the "me" God sees.

- A. To grow in my ability to love and to be loved**
- B. To stay where I am**
- C. "The questions are found on page 18 of the workbook. The wives will stay in the conference room to write."**

D. Directions for writing time

Give directions for the writing time. Right up front, advise them that there will be no exchange of workbooks following this reflection time. Invite them to be honest with themselves in order to make the most of the discoveries about themselves they might reach during this time. Let the participants know that there will be a signal when the writing time is over.

Participants need to be strongly motivated in this section to write fully and honestly about themselves. You might want to emphasize the "hot pen" technique, as well as making sure you have clearly explained the private nature of this writing.

It is not necessary to tell the participants about the callback process at this time. At the end of the writing time, ask the wives to go and get their husbands and return immediately to the conference room. After sitting for such a long time, it would be good to get them up to move around. Also, many of them may need to use the washroom facilities.

Questions:

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

Writing time: 15 minutes Dialogue time: None

(Wives stay in the conference room to write)

DIALOGUE QUESTIONS TO HELP DEVELOP THIS TALK:

1. How does my personality style encourage and promote relationships with others? WAMFAMA?
2. How does the way I present myself disappoint, frustrate or annoy others? WAMFAMA?
3. Describe my personality style and typical way(s) I try to promote relationships with others?
WAMFAMA?
4. Because of who I am, my greatest source of worry and concern is _____? WAMFAMA?
5. What parts of me do I hide from others? WAMFAMA?
6. What parts of me do I hide from you? WAMFTYT?
7. When I feel most unsure, how do I try to conceal it? WAMFAMA?
8. What are the negative effects on my relationship(s) with others (and my spouse) when I conceal my vulnerabilities and weaknesses? WAMFAMA?
9. Each of us, at times, has a poor self-image. WAMF hearing that statement?
10. WAMF when I hear the narrative from "Beauty and the Beast"?
11. What does the story of the Beast tell me about my self-image and myself? WAMFTYT?
12. WAMF receiving a compliment at work?
13. WAMF receiving a compliment from you?
14. WAMF receiving a compliment from someone other than you? Pick someone from whom you least expect compliments.
15. If I could change one thing about myself, I would change _____. WAMFTYT?
16. WAMF knowing that God loves me just as I am?
17. Read Isaiah 43:1-4. WAMF after reading this passage?
18. Do I believe that God created me as good and unique? WAMFAMA?

WAMFAMA? = What are my feelings about my answer?

WAMF? = What are my feelings?

WAMFTYT? = What are my feelings telling you this?

REFERENCES:

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- Who Do You Think You Are, Harary and Donahue (1994)
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- You Just Don't Understand, Tannen (1990)
- Discovering My Inner Child, Arnold (1992)
- Care of the Soul, Moore (1992)
- Soul Mates, Moore (1994)