

Possible Exercises for Ongoing Couple Enrichment Groups

(adapted from "Right Steps: Discovering a Better Marriage" by Better Marriages
(www.bettermarriages.org)

I feel loved when...

Individually complete the following sentence with at least five actions or behaviors your spouse has done (at any time) that helped you feel loved or that you have especially appreciated.

I feel loved when . . . because... (or) I appreciate it when . . . because....

Take turns telling your partner what you wrote.

Share with your partner which one of the behaviors your partner stated that you would be willing to repeat more frequently.

Nurturing our relationship, one action at a time

Write down one or two activities you do together that nurture your relationship. Share what you have written with your partner, elaborating on why these activities feel nurturing.

Good listeners

Complete these sentences and share with your partner:

I believe that you are really listening to me when....because...

I believe that you are NOT really listening to me when....because...

When I perceive you are not listening, I tend to..... because.....

When I perceive you really are listening, I tend to..... because.....

Listening to each other

Write down five qualities about yourself that you genuinely like. Share these with your partner, giving your partner examples and explaining how you think these qualities affect your life together. After each partner has shared, take time to discuss together how you felt about each other's listening.

Converting “you” messages to “I” messages

Change each of these “you” messages into an “I” message. Add a few “you messages” you have recently given or received and translate them into “I” messages. Then share your responses with your partner and discuss what was easy/difficult about the exercise.

You message: You make me mad when you walk away when I’m talking.

I message: _____

You message: You are late for supper again, as usual.

I message: _____

You message: You come on too fast when we make love

I message: _____

You message: You’re going to send us to the poorhouse if you don’t stop using the credit cards.

I message: _____

You message: I feel like you never listen to me

I message: _____

You message:

I message: _____

You message: _____

I message: _____

Couple Speak

Complete these four questions individually, then share your answers with your partner:

Do I usually feel heard and understood by my partner? If not, why?

What issues am I reluctant to discuss with my partner? Why?

What one thing could I do to communicate more productively with my partner?

What one thing would I like my partner to do to communicate more productively with me?

Response to conflict

Place a check in front of the actions you typically take in responding to conflict. (It may be helpful to note recent examples.) Share your list with your partner. Discuss whether you are satisfied with the ways in which you usually behave or what might make it possible to change responses you are not satisfied with.

- Withdraw physically
- Withdraw emotionally
- Try to negotiate
- Force my own way
- Give in
- Blame someone else
- Try to explain
- Criticize my partner
- Threaten trouble
- Pretend not to understand
- Face differences openly
- Seem resentful
- Postpone action
- Apply pressure
- Other: _____

Healing

“Sharing and working through situations is a vitally important way of enabling a close relationship to grow” – David Mace.

Life isn't always easy. Sometimes we get hurt. Answer these questions individually, then share your answers with your partner:

When I feel hurt, I usually respond by.....

The time I most remember you healing a hurt between us was.....

When I am hurt, I would appreciate it if you would.....

When you are hurt, I would appreciate it if you would.....

Commitment

Answer these questions and then discuss with your partner:

My definition of commitment in a relationship is....

Several ways I try to show you I am committed to our relationship are.....

Several ways you show me you are committed to our relationship are.....

Other ways I would like you to show me you are committed to our relationship are....

Intimacy Inventory

One simple definition of intimacy is “shared privacy”. Below are seven aspects of intimacy in a relationship. Consider your relationship and score each area from 1 to 5 (5 being highest), representing where you think you are right now in each area.

- Emotional intimacy – a closeness of feelings
- Social intimacy – having friends in common
- Intellectual intimacy – sharing ideas
- Recreational intimacy – enjoying the same hobbies, sports, or leisure activities
- Spiritual intimacy – having a similar view of religious faith or the meaning of life
- Aesthetic intimacy – sharing the same concepts of beauty
- Sexual intimacy – enjoying sexual experiences together

Share your list with your partner. Choose one area that the two of you would like to have more intimacy in and discuss what changes you could implement to make this happen.