



P
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Welcome to the PREP self-study presentation.

Please use this presentation to complete the '[PREP Self-study Questions](#)'



PREP[®]

**Foundation and
Danger Signs**

**The Prevention and
Relationship
Enhancement Program**

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What is PREP®?

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- PREP stands for :
 - *The Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program*
- PREP is a research-based approach to helping couples prevent divorce and preserve a lasting love.
- PREP is based on 20 years of research at the University of Denver (and other universities).





Core Assumptions

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- The key is to *PREVENT* serious problems.
- By knowing key *RISK* factors for marital problems, you will know more about what makes successful marriages.
- How you communicate and handle conflict is crucial for how your marriage will go.
- All couples will have problems. It's how you handle them that counts most.



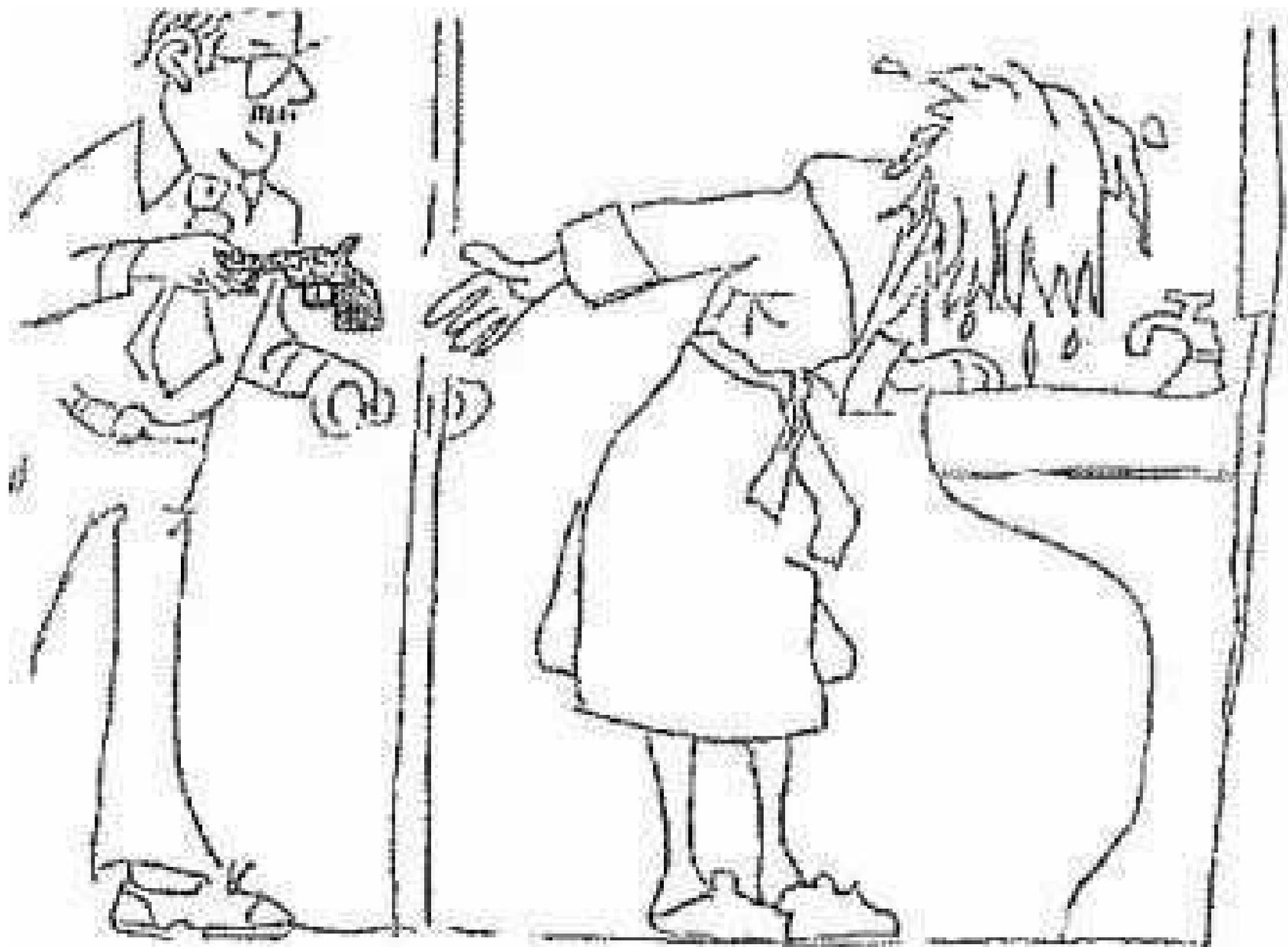


Danger Signs

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- Escalation
- Invalidation
- Negative Interpretations
- Avoidance and Withdrawal



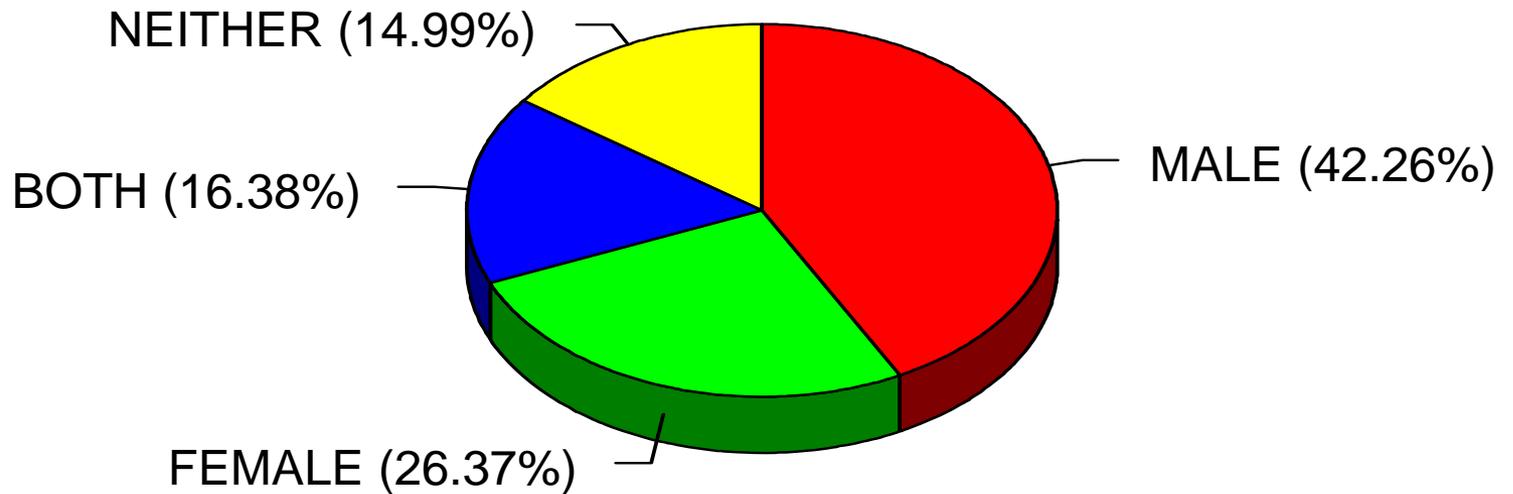


"Hand me the Hairdryer"



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Who Tends To Withdraw In An Argument?



Data based on U.S. nationwide random phone survey of 947 adults who were engaged, cohabitating, or married. (Stanley & Markman, PREP, Inc., 1996; 303-759-9931)



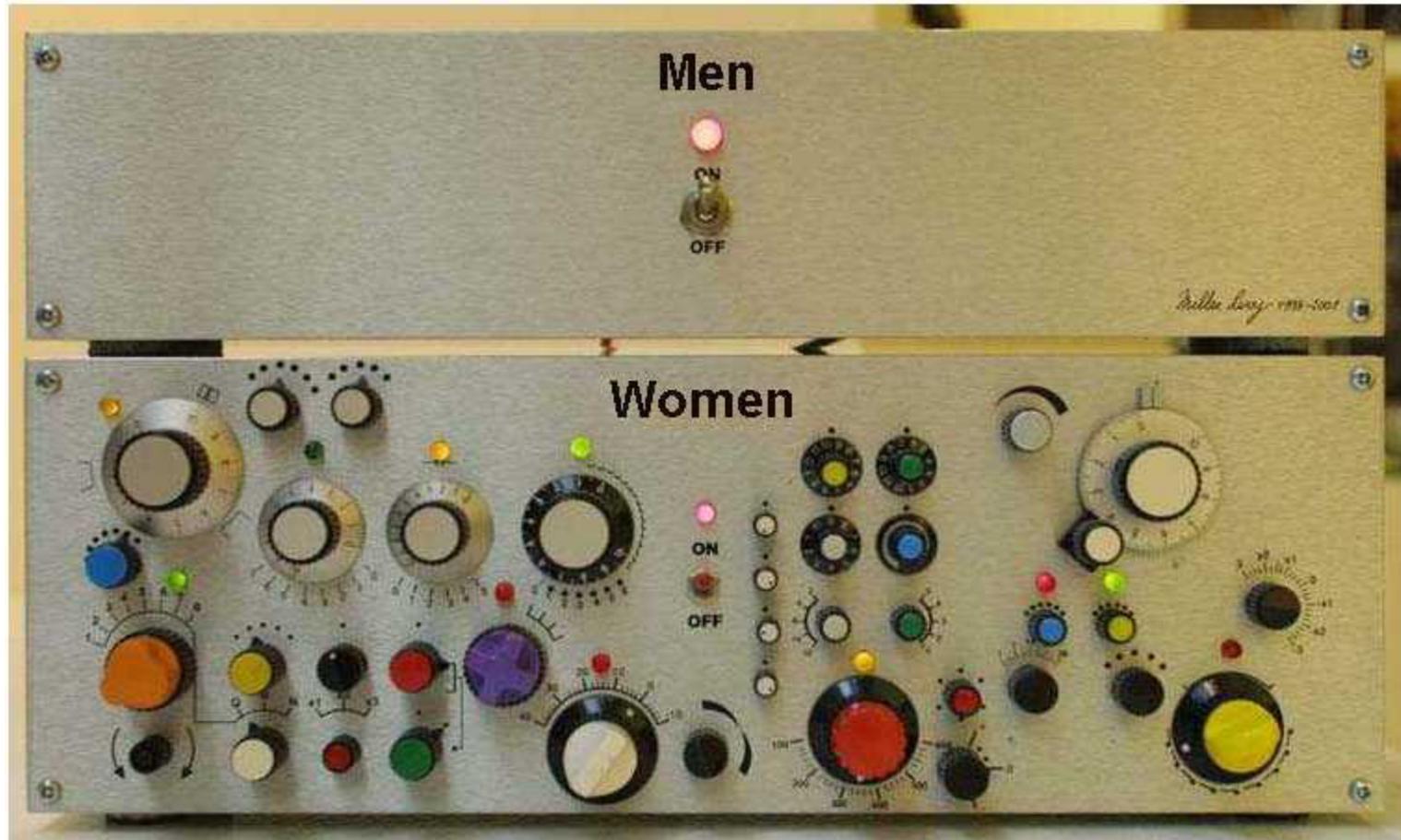
Key Points

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- The negative patterns that set apart couples headed for trouble can be subtle.
- Negative patterns predict the future better than the positive.
- To maintain a happy marriage a couple needs 5 to 20 positives for every negative.
- To build and keep a great marriage, stop, reduce, or never begin the negative patterns.



Gender Differences





Communication Styles

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- Important to a Woman
 - Values relational moments far more than occupational achievements
- Important to a Man
 - Men are more motivated to achieve goals rather than absorb moments





Verbal Intimacy

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- Important to a Man
 - Men tend to “report” rather than converse
- Important to a Woman
 - Needs to know that a man is genuinely listening and not trying to fix her problem





Dealing with Conflict

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- Important to a Man
 - When men become uncaring or distant, it's usually because they are afraid of something
- Important to a Woman
 - Needs to feel free to share her opinion and receive her husband's understanding without him getting frustrated or angry





Pursuing and Withdrawing

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- Important to a Man
 - Men want to manage their own problems, be "Mr. Fix-it" and "get to the bottom line." They don't want help!
- Important to a Woman
 - Women tend to be the pursuers, not because they like to fight, but because they need to "connect" with their partner. They want to improve the relationship at all cost





The “Time Out” Ground Rule

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- Rules for TIME OUT:
 - Either can call one at any time.
 - Use the term “Time Out” or some other agreed upon phrase.
 - Agree to respect this as a cue things are not going right.
- Two options when you call a Time Out
 - 1) Decide together to drop the issue for the time being OR
 - 2) Shift into safer way to communicate



PREP®

**Safety, Structure,
and Communication**

**The Prevention and
Relationship
Enhancement Program**



Vulnerability, Safety, & Structure

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- Emotional safety is critical to having great communication.
- Structure provides for greater safety





Creating Structure and Safety

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- We will now focus on the Speaker/Listener Technique.
 - ▶ A structured way to communicate safely and clearly when you really need to do it well.
 - ▶ The technique also is a great way to practice better communication, in general.
 - ▶ It counteracts all of the Danger Signs covered so far.





Keys for the Technique

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- The goal is to talk without fighting.
 - ▶ Often one wants to talk more and
 - ▶ One wants to fight less.
- Ban problem solution
 - ▶ Focus on understanding, not agreement.





The Speaker / Listener Technique

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- **Rules for the *Speaker***
 1. Speak for yourself. Don't mind read!
 2. Don't go on and on.
 3. Stop and let the listener paraphrase.
- **Rules for *Listener***
 1. Paraphrase what you hear.
 2. Don't rebut. Focus on what the speaker is saying.
- **Rules for *Both***
 1. The speaker has the floor.
 2. Speaker keeps the floor while the listener paraphrases.
 3. Share the floor.





Practice, Practice, Practice...

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- Practicing it regularly for the next few weeks will do two important things for your relationship:
 - ▶ You will know how to communicate well when needed.
 - ▶ You will learn better communication skills, and benefit from that even when you are not using the full structure.



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Filters

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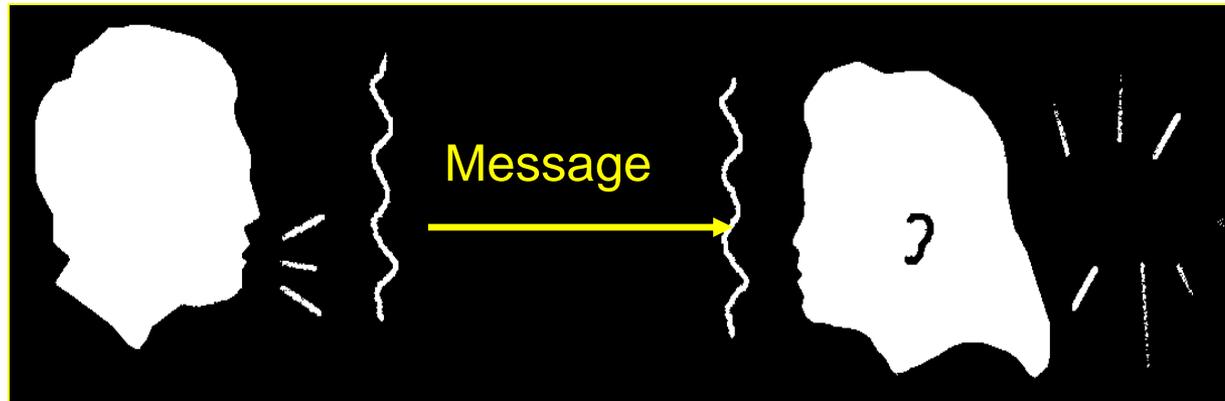
Filters

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Speaker

Listener

Intent



Impact





Bob and Mary after a long hard day for both.

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Bob: (Thinking, he'd like to go out to dinner with Mary, says)

"What should we do for dinner tonight?"





Mary hears "when will dinner be ready?"

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"Why is it always my job to make dinner?"





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Bob hears something negative,
"why is she so mad?"

"It is not always your job to make dinner. I made dinner once last week!"





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(Negative cycle continues, as Mary tends to feel she does everything around the house)

Mary: "Bringing home hamburgers and fries is not making dinner, Bob."





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(In continued frustration, Bob gives up, saying)

"Just forget it. I didn't want to go out with you anyway."





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(Confused, Mary can't remember him saying anything about going out)

"You never said anything about going out"





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(Bob, feeling really angry)

"Yes I did. I asked you where you wanted to go out to dinner, and you got mad."





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Mary: "I got mad? You never said anything about going out."





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Bob: "Did too."

Mary: "Did not."

Bob: "Did too."





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Mary: "You're never wrong,
are you?"



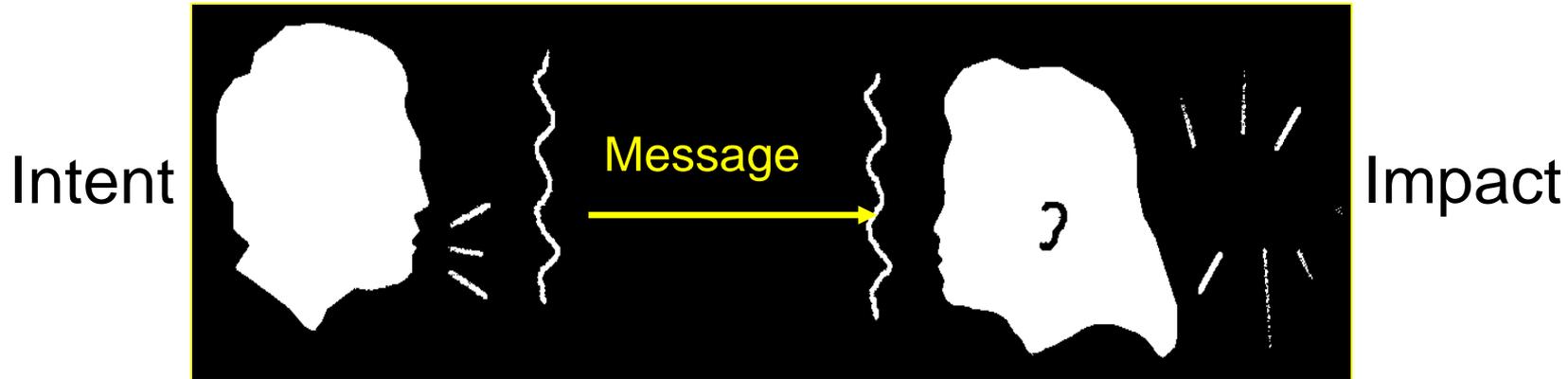


Types of Filters

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Speaker

Listener



- Inattention
- Emotional States
- Beliefs and Expectations
- Style Differences
- Self-Protection





What Can You Do?

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- Recognize that all kinds of filters become barriers to intimacy and openness.
- Take responsibility for understanding your filters.
- Don't argue about the past. Deal with the here and now.
- Announce your filters when you know they are there.
- Give your partner the benefit of the doubt. Look for the best, not the worst.



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Issues and Events

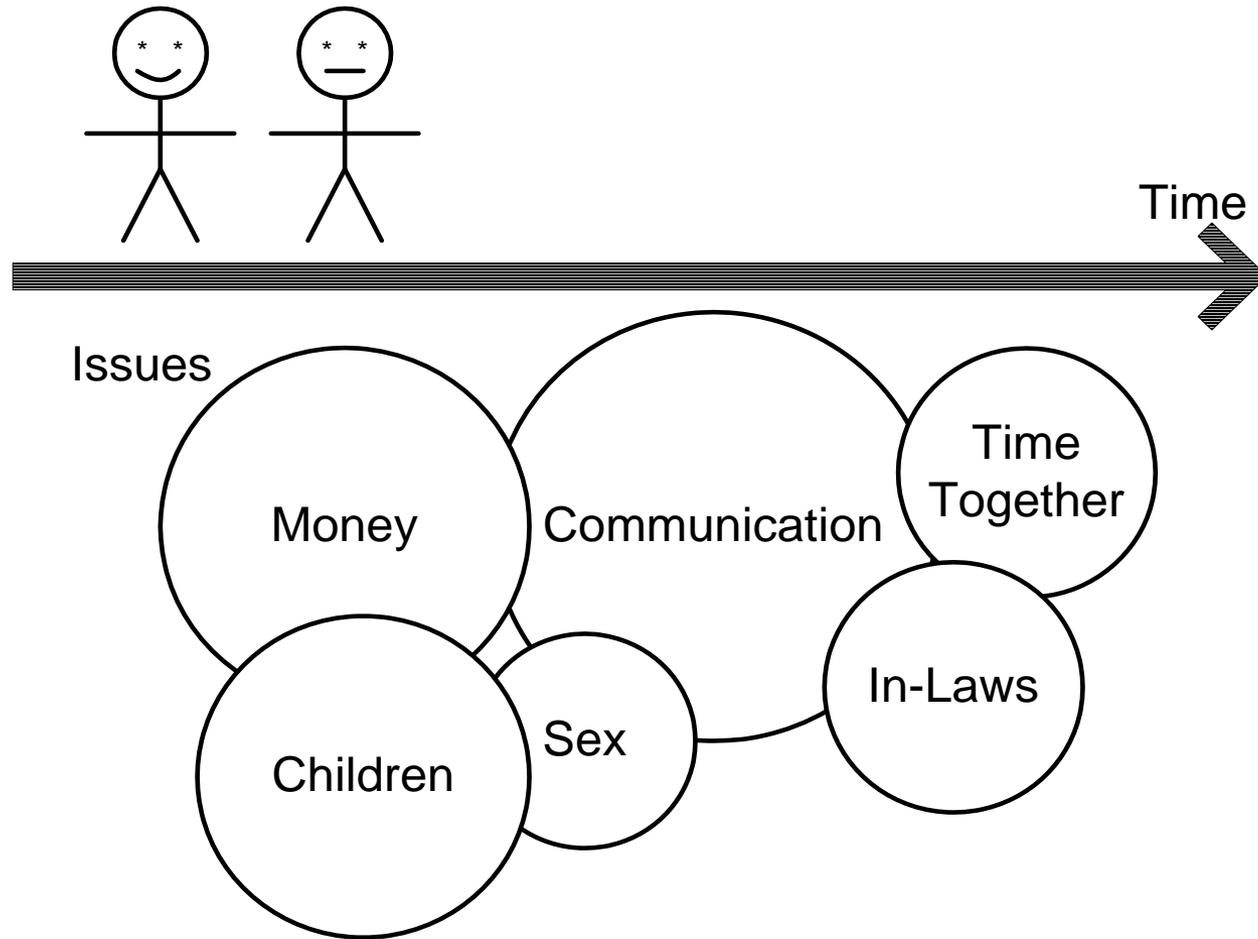
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Issues and Events Model

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A Sad Truth

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- *Most couples only deal with their issues in the context of events.*





Issues and Events

Events

Issues

**Hidden
Issues**

**P
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Hidden Issues

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- ***Control and Power***
 - Who's in charge? Do you feel controlled?
- ***Caring***
 - Do you feel loved and cared for?
- ***Recognition***
 - Do you feel valued by your partner for who you are and what you do?





More Hidden Issues

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- ***Commitment***
 - Is your relationship secure? “Are you going to stay with me?”
- ***Integrity***
 - When you feel challenged in how you see yourself
- ***Acceptance***
 - The parent of all hidden issues.
 - Desire for acceptance and fear of rejection.





Signs of Hidden Issues

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- Spinning Your Wheels
- Avoidance
- Trivial Triggers
- Score Keeping





Handling Issues and Events

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- *Events* are often best handled by observing the Ground Rules, especially the Time Out rule.
- *Issues* can be kept smaller and less negatively charged by regularly dealing with the problems that come your way.
- *Hidden Issues* often respond best to open, safe, and clear communication.



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Expectations

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Definition

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- Expectations are beliefs about the way things will be or should be-- including about behaviors, roles, life and death, relationships, and so forth.
- Expectations that are not met lead to feelings of sadness, disappointment, frustration, and anger.





Expectations

- What are some key expectations that people have about marriage?

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Unconditional Love





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Appreciation





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Honesty





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Faithfulness





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Respect





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Happiness





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MAJOR AREAS OF EXPECTATIONS





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Work/Careers





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Decision Making





P
R
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Sex





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Religious Life/ World View





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Money





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In-laws





Children

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Rules in the Relationship





Three Key Problems:

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1. You can be **UNAWARE** of your expectations or your partner's expectations.
2. Your expectations may be **UNREASONABLE**.
3. Your expectations may be **UNSPOKEN**.





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WHAT TO DO ABOUT EXPECTATIONS





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Identify your expectations





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**Consider if
they are realistic**

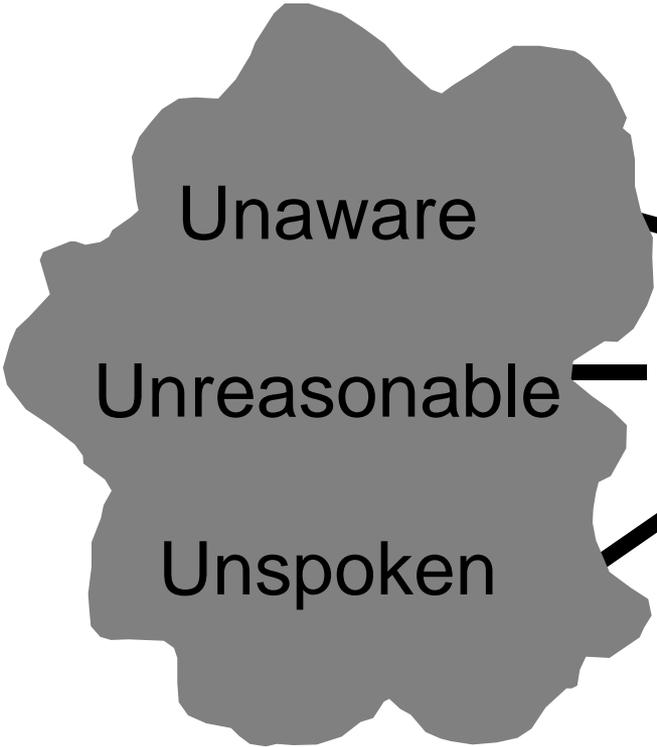


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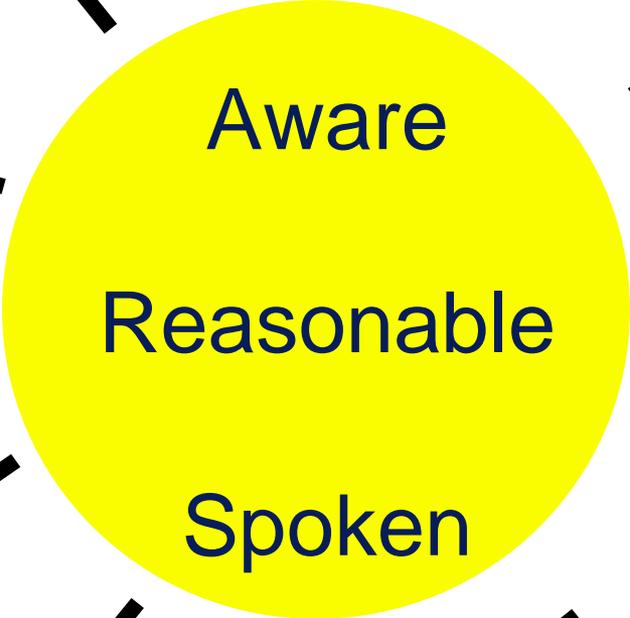
**Talk together
about
your expectations**



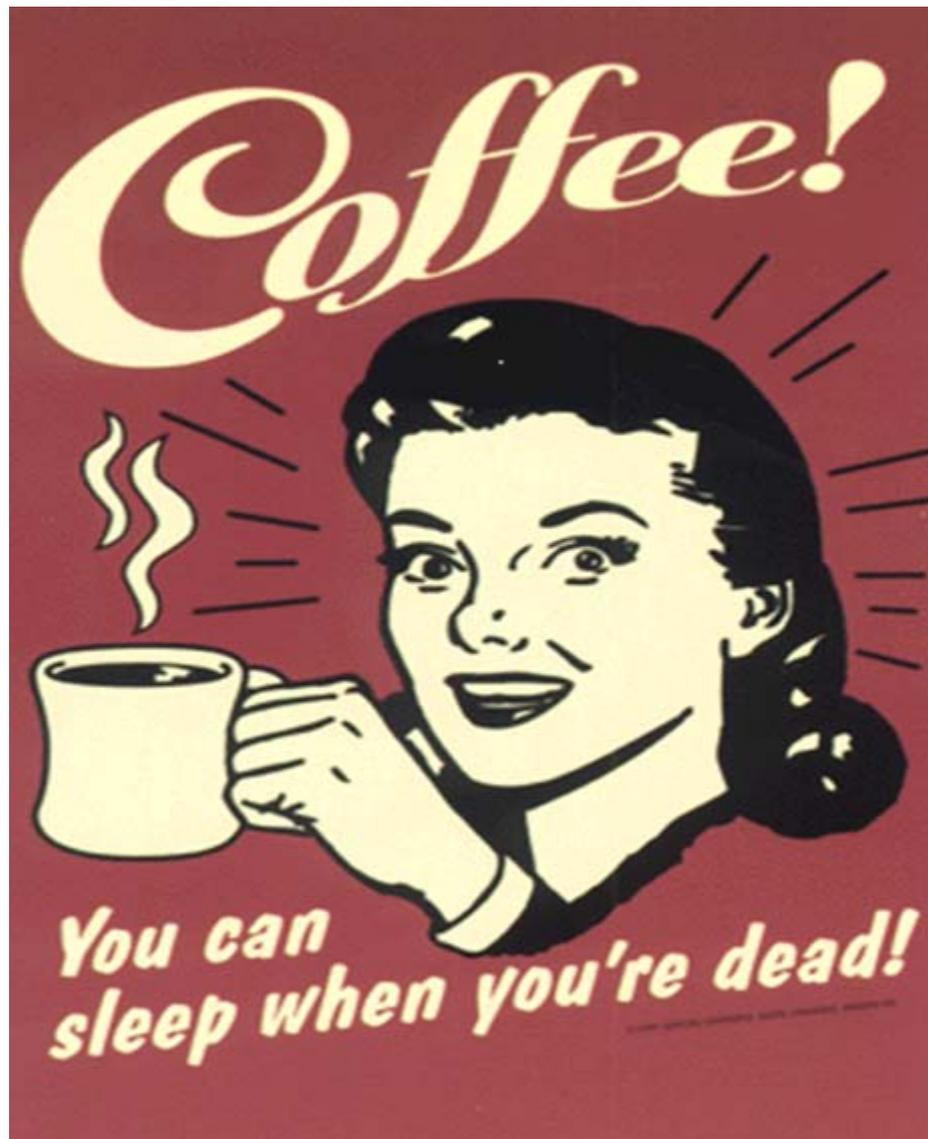
Expectations



In the FOG



In the CLEAR



NEED A BREAK ?

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and Constructive Griping**

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Negative Communication



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MINDREADING



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CHARACTER ASSASSINATION





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Example of Character Assassination





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H: Did you pick up my
dry cleaning?





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W: (*Mocking*) "Did you pick up my dry cleaning?"

Pick up your own stupid dry cleaning. What am I, your maid?





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H: Hardly. If you were a maid, at least you'd know how to clean.





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2nd Example of Character Assassination





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H: Oh, well, what are you saying about me now, Pam?





**P
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W: My usual complaint that you never listen to me. We have financial needs that we just can't put off any longer. We need a vacation badly, but you just conveniently manage never to hear that one, do you.





P
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H: Maybe I would feel more like listening to you if you would be a little more careful with our money.





P
R
E
P

W: I am careful with our money. If you'd provide a little more money for us, the kind of care you ask for wouldn't be so necessary.





P
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H: Well I didn't know I married a princess.





P
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P

W: Well I didn't know I married a failure.





CROSS-COMPLAINING

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**P
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Example of Cross-Complaining

Husband and Wife at the Dinner Table





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H: You smoke too much!





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E
P

W: But I 've got those
new filters.





P
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E
P

H: You're just kidding yourself.





P
R
E
P

W: You know I just can't stop. I'm not a strong person.





P
R
E
P

H: Yeah, but I don't like your smoking. It gives you bad breath.





P
R
E
P

W: Well, I don't like your beer belly. Why don't you stop drinking beer?





P
R
E
P

H: It's your fault because you feed me fattening things like this dinner tonight, which by the way, was overcooked.





P
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W: Well, get yourself a
new cook, fatty.
(She leaves the table)





**P
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KITCHEN SINKING





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SUMMARIZING SELF OVER AND OVER





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STANDOFF'S





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Example of Standoff/Defensiveness





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W: So, once again you didn't pay the credit card on time and now we have to pay a penalty. I don't know how I ended up with such an irresponsible man.





P
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H: It was your turn to pay the bills this month, not mine.





P
R
E
P

W: Now you're going to lie to get out of this?





P
R
E
P

H: You're the liar! Last month we agreed that you would handle the bills this month.





P
R
E
P

W: Only because you're too irresponsible to be trusted with them. But I wasn't supposed to start paying till *next month.*





P
R
E
P

H: That's not true.





P
R
E
P

W: You're so full of it!





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CATASTROPHIC STATEMENTS

ALWAYS

Never





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BLAMING





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Invalidation





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Withdrawal/Avoidance





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Example of Withdrawal



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W: Again you are very late!





P
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P

**H: Got caught in traffic.
Sorry. What's for dinner?**





P
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W: Don't you think you could have the consideration to call me if you know you're going to be late? We've talked about this a hundred times.





P
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P

H: There was no chance
to call.





P
R
E
P

W: You worked late, didn't you? It wasn't all traffic that made you late.





P
R
E
P

H: Yes I worked late, and yes, I am inconsiderate; but I'm also hungry and tired. What's for dinner?





P
R
E
P

W: I've got news for you mister; we're going out. I've made reservations at Arnie's for eight.





P
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H: I've got news for you.
I'm not going to take this
crap. I need a drink.
See ya!

*(Husband storms out the house,
on his way to a local club.)*





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Constructive Communication

A Better Way to Raise Concerns ...





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Show Respect



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Be Specific





**P
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XYZ STATEMENTS





Constructive Griping

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**When You Do X (specific action)
In Situation Y (specific setting)
I Feel Z (specific feeling)**





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INSTEAD OF SAYING:

**Your job is more
important to you than
I am.**





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SAY:

When you didn't call to tell me you were going to be late for dinner I felt frustrated.





**P
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INSTEAD OF SAYING:
You are incredibly irresponsible for bouncing checks. I'm constantly having to fix what you screw up.





P
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SAY:

When you bounced several checks and the bank called, I really felt embarrassed.





P
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INSTEAD OF SAYING:
**You're never home at
night. I don't even feel
married to you anymore.**





P
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SAY:

I really felt left out when you spent all night at your brother's house.





Constructive Griping

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- When you did X,
 - Specific Behavior
- In situation Y,
 - Specific Situation
- I felt Z.
 - Owning feelings
 - Be Respectful and Be Specific!



XYZ Concept from
*A Couples' Guide to
Communication*,
(1976), Research Press, Inc.

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Fun

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Fun Is Important!

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- People don't get married to have conflicts and solve problems.
- You have to handle these things well, but that is not what attracted you to this other person.
- Fun is surprisingly important in marital health and happiness.
- Too many couples do not keep fun alive in their marriages





Keeping Fun Alive!

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- Make the time.
- Protect the time from conflict.
 - No issues or problem solving.
- Get going!
- Break Out of Ruts.





What's Fun?

- Group Brainstorm
- Any ideas at all.
- No criticisms.
- Be creative.

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Problem Solving

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Problems Facts

- *All couples will encounter problems.*

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What Couples Argue About Most

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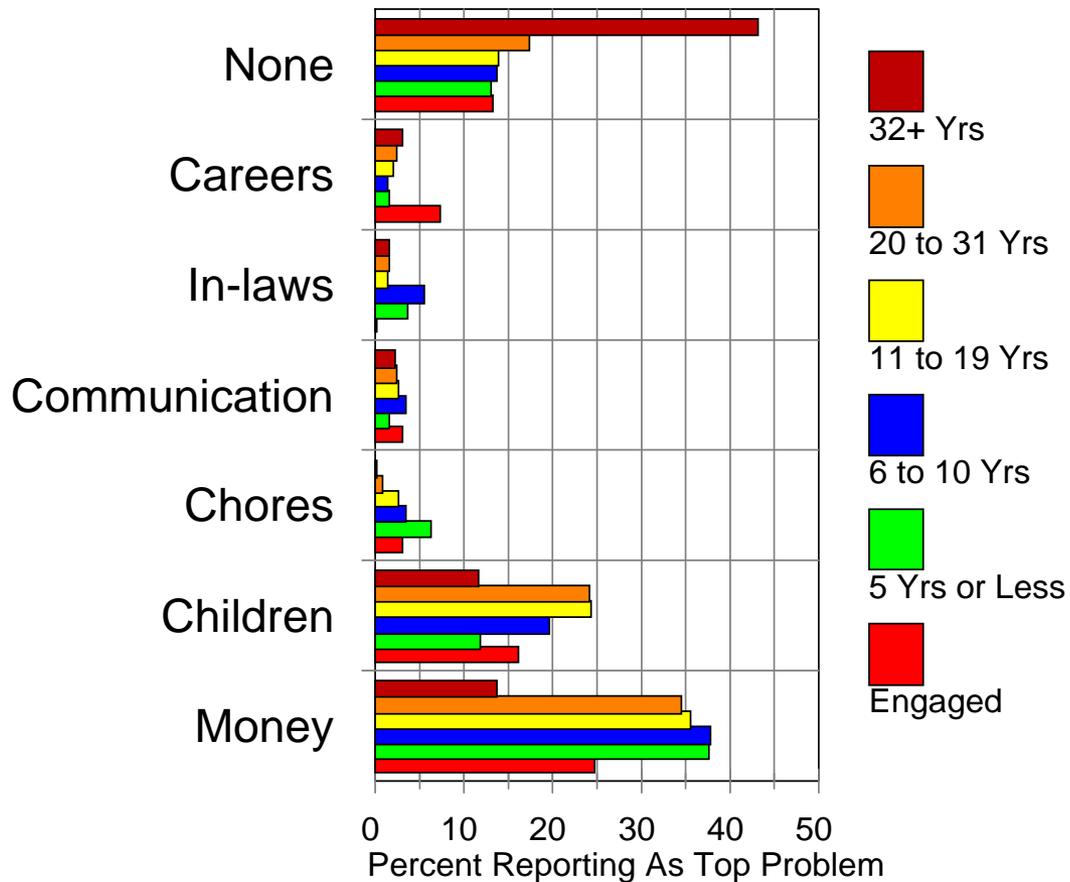
- University of Denver Long Term Study:
 - Before Marriage:
 - money, jealousy, in-laws, friends
 - After Marriage:
 - money, communication, sex
- Stanley and Markman's National Poll:
 - Across most groups of married couples:
 - money & children were the top answers



Top Argument Starter by Years Married



PREP



Poll Question: Name the one thing that you and your partner argue about most.

Data based on U.S. nationwide random phone survey of 947 adults who were engaged, cohabitating, or married. (Stanley & Markman, PREP, Inc., 1996; 303-759-9931)





Problems Facts

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- *It is best to handle problems as a team*
- *Quick solutions are not lasting solutions.*





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PROBLEM SOLVING





Problem Discussion

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- ❖ Get the issues out before you attempt to problem solve
- ❖ Use Speaker-Listener technique
- ❖ You should feel heard and validated even where you disagree





Work on the problem as a

TEAM

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Problem Solving Model

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- **Problem Discussion**

- ▶ Goal: understand and to be understood.
- ▶ Use The Speaker / Listener technique.
- ▶ Create an environment of teamwork!



- **Problem Solution**

- ▶ Agenda setting
- ▶ Brainstorming
- ▶ Agreement and compromise
- ▶ Follow-up





PROBLEM SOLUTION

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STEP 1: Agenda Building

- ❖ **Decide on what to work on right now**
- ❖ **Plan to work the other pieces of the problem at another time**
- ❖ **Focus in and narrow down the concerns**

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STEP 2: Brainstorming

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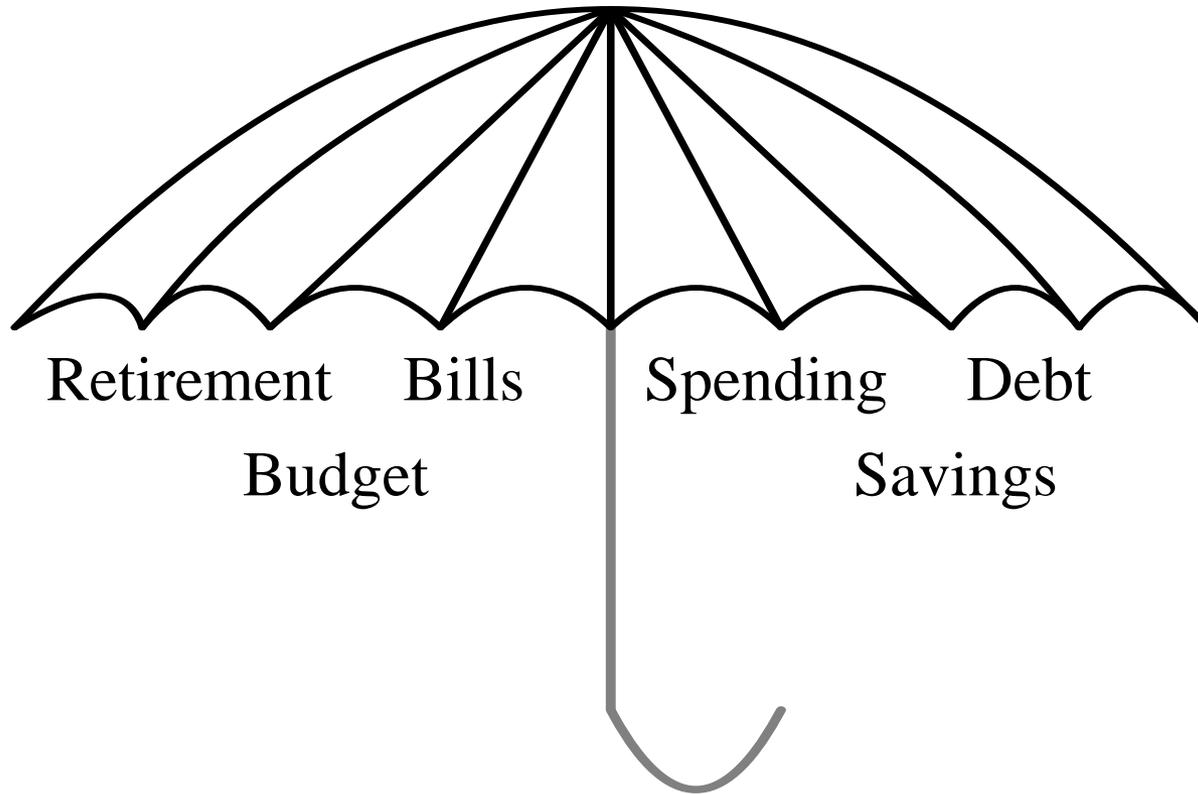
- ❖ Write down suggestions/ideas
- ❖ Come up with as many solutions as you can
- ❖ Do not comment on or criticize ideas during brainstorming
- ❖ Be creative





Umbrella Model

Money



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STEP 3: Agreement and Compromise

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- ❖ Work toward what you can both agree to do
- ❖ Discuss pros and cons of different potential solutions





STEP 4: Follow up

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- ❖ Agree on solution to be tried now
- ❖ Agree on a time frame to try solution and agree to assess and revise as needed



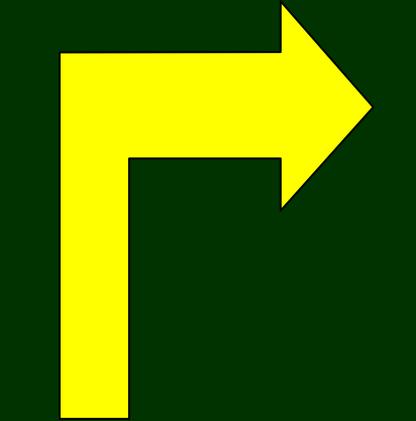


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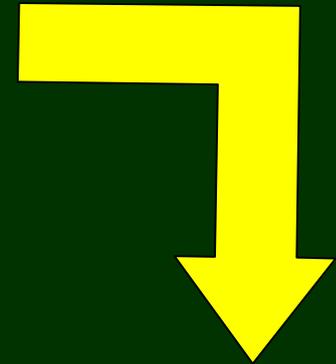
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- ❖ Often a sign you are not working as a team
- ❖ Some issues could be hidden
- ❖ Stop and loop back to problem discussion using the Speaker-Listener technique



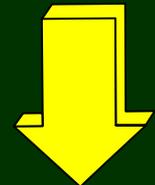


problem
discussion



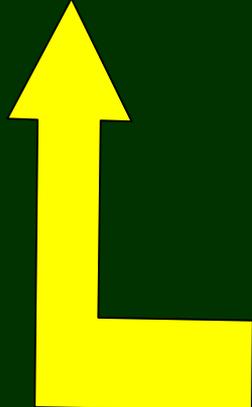
assessment

agenda building

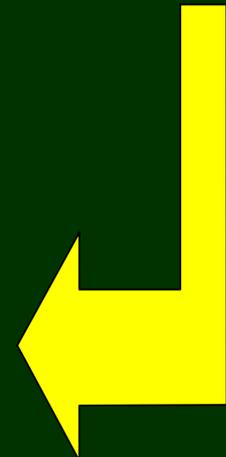


follow up

brainstorming



agreement and compromise





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Do you need a . . .



BREAK

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Friendship

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Reflection

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- What do you want in a mate?
- What is a friend?





How to Talk Like Friends

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- Make the time.
- Protect the time from conflict.
 - No issues.
 - No problem solving.
- Listen Like A Friend
 - Avoid advice giving, unless asked.
 - Talk about the things friends talk about.



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Ground Rules

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Two Times It's Most Important to Manage Your Emotions Well

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- When you are upset
- When your partner is upset





Time Out

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- When conflict is escalating we will call a “Time Out” or “Stop Action” and either,
 - a) try it again, using the Speaker/Listener Technique
 - b) agree to talk later at specified time about the issue, using the Speaker/Listener Technique.





Speaker/Listener Technique

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- When we are having trouble communicating we will “engage” the Speaker/Listener Technique.





Problem Solving

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- When working on a problem, we will separate Problem-Discussion from Problem-Solution.





Not a good time...

- We can bring up issues at any time, but the “listener” can say “this is not a good time.”

If listener does not want to talk at that time, he or she takes responsibility for setting up a time to talk in the near future.

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Regular Couple Meeting

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- We will have weekly couple meetings for dealing with issues (not “date night”).





Fun, Friendship, Sensuality, & Spirituality

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- We will make time for the great things:
 - fun,
 - friendship,
 - sensuality,
 - spirituality
- We will agree to protect these times from conflict and the need to deal with issues .



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Core Belief Systems

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Positive or Negative?

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- Core beliefs can lead to the enhancement of your relationship – or be a risk factor.
- Spiritual orientations, religious beliefs, and core beliefs are issues that have profound effects on marriages





Religious and Spiritual Matters

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- What do you think of when you think of *religious*?
- What do you think of when you think of *spiritual*?





Keys For All Couples

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- All couples need social support.
- Core values benefit a marriage:
 - Commitment
 - Respect
 - Intimacy
 - Forgiveness
- You need to consider the similarities and differences in your **WORLD VIEWS** and how these will affect your marriage.





Core Beliefs and Expectations

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- Expectations based in core belief systems
 - Religious practices
 - Child rearing practices
 - Relationship expectations
- Clarify and consider expectations related to world views



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**The Sensual/Sexual
Relationship**

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Sensuality vs. Sexuality

- What do they mean to you?
 - Sensuality
 - Sexuality

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Preserving Sensuality

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- Make the time!
- Protect the time from conflict!
 - Make conflict and issues off limits for sensual time together.
- Pay attention to sensuality.
 - Non-sexual touching.
 - Hugging, cuddling, massage, etc.
 - Touching exercises.





Communicate Your Desires

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- Don't assume you know everything your partner desires.
- Don't assume your partner knows all of your desires.





Other Tips for Preserving the Sensual Side of Marriage

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- Try out some new ideas.
- Be creative!
- Read some books on the subject.
- Break out of ruts.



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Forgiveness

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Thinking About Forgiveness?

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- What comes to your mind when you think about forgiveness?
- What concerns come to mind?





Definitions

- A canceled debt is the picture of forgiveness.

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What Forgiveness Does Not Mean

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- Forgiving is not forgetting.
- One can forgive and still grieve.
- Forgiving does not mean that the person committing an offense is not responsible for their behavior.





Getting Going With Forgiveness

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- Set agenda to work on the issue in question.
- Fully explore the pain and concerns related to this issue for both.
- The offender asks for forgiveness
- The offended agrees to forgive
- Positive commitment to change if there are recurrent patterns.
- Move forward



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Commitment

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Considering Commitment

- What do you think of when you think about commitment?
- What sort of images come to mind?

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What is Commitment?

- Two Faces of Commitment
 - Personal Dedication
 - Constraint commitment

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Constraints

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- Social Pressure
- Financial Pressures
- Children
- Termination Procedures
- Moral Factors
- Concern for Partner's Welfare
- Poorer Alternative Quality

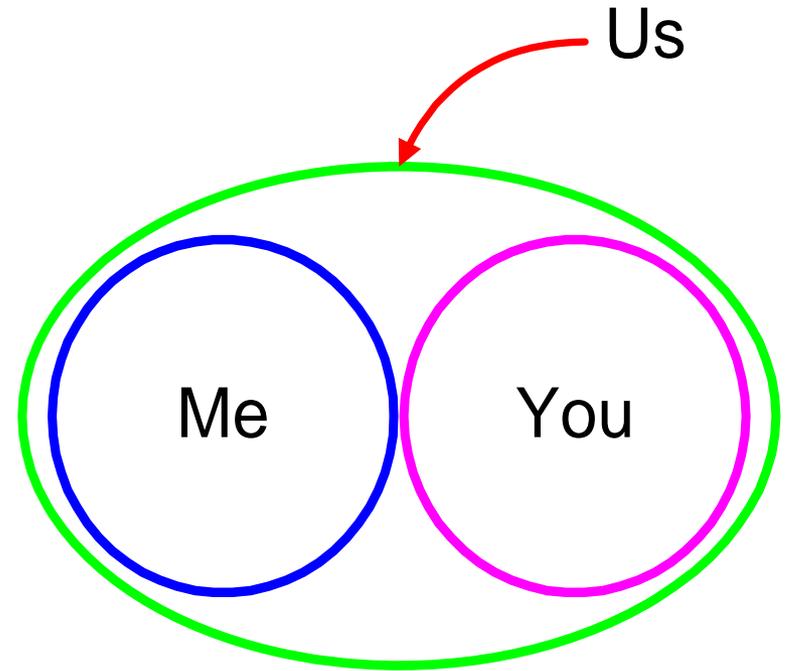




Dedicated Couples Show:

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- Couple Identity



Differentiated We-ness





Dedicated Couples Show:

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- Greater Priority for the Relationship
- More Satisfaction with Giving
- *Less Alternative Monitoring*





The Big Picture

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- Constraint helps a marriage be stable.
- Dedication helps a marriage be fulfilling.
- Commitment is also about choices:
 - Do you view it as losing something?
 - Or, as gaining a deeper, enriched life?
 - It is your choice!



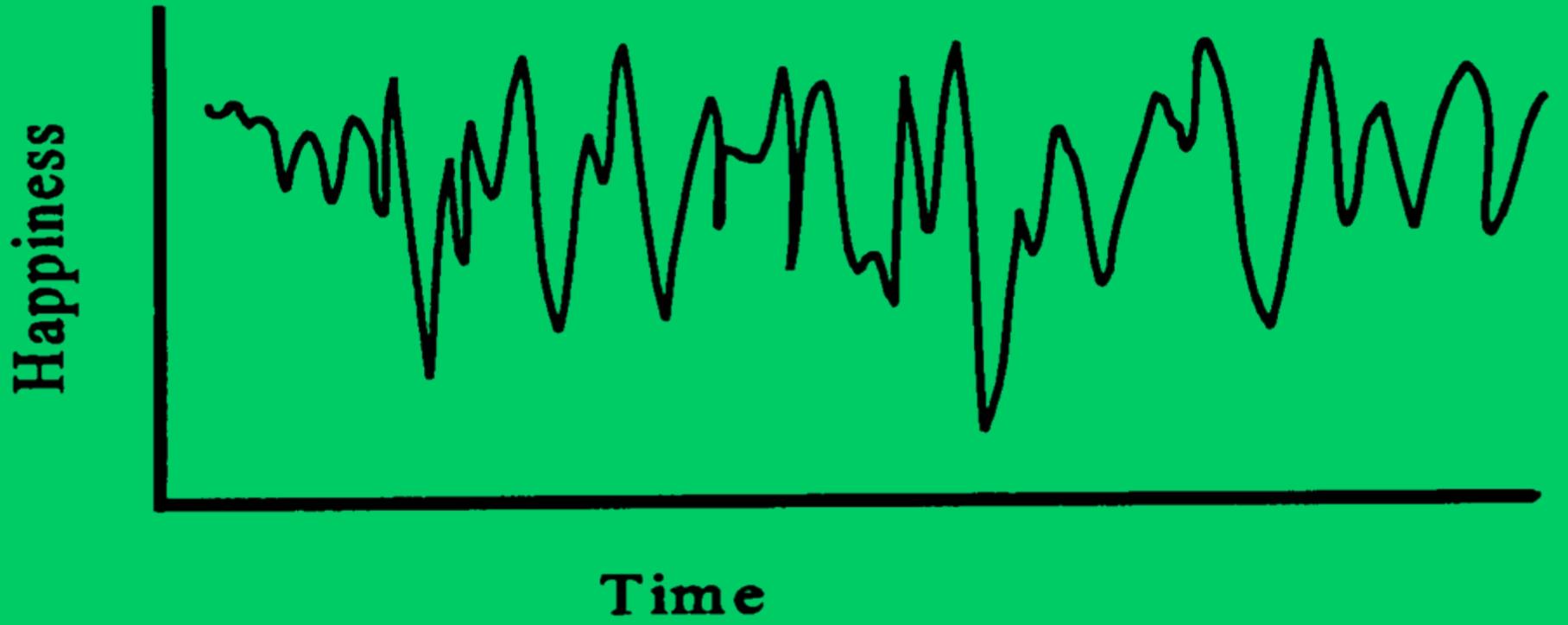


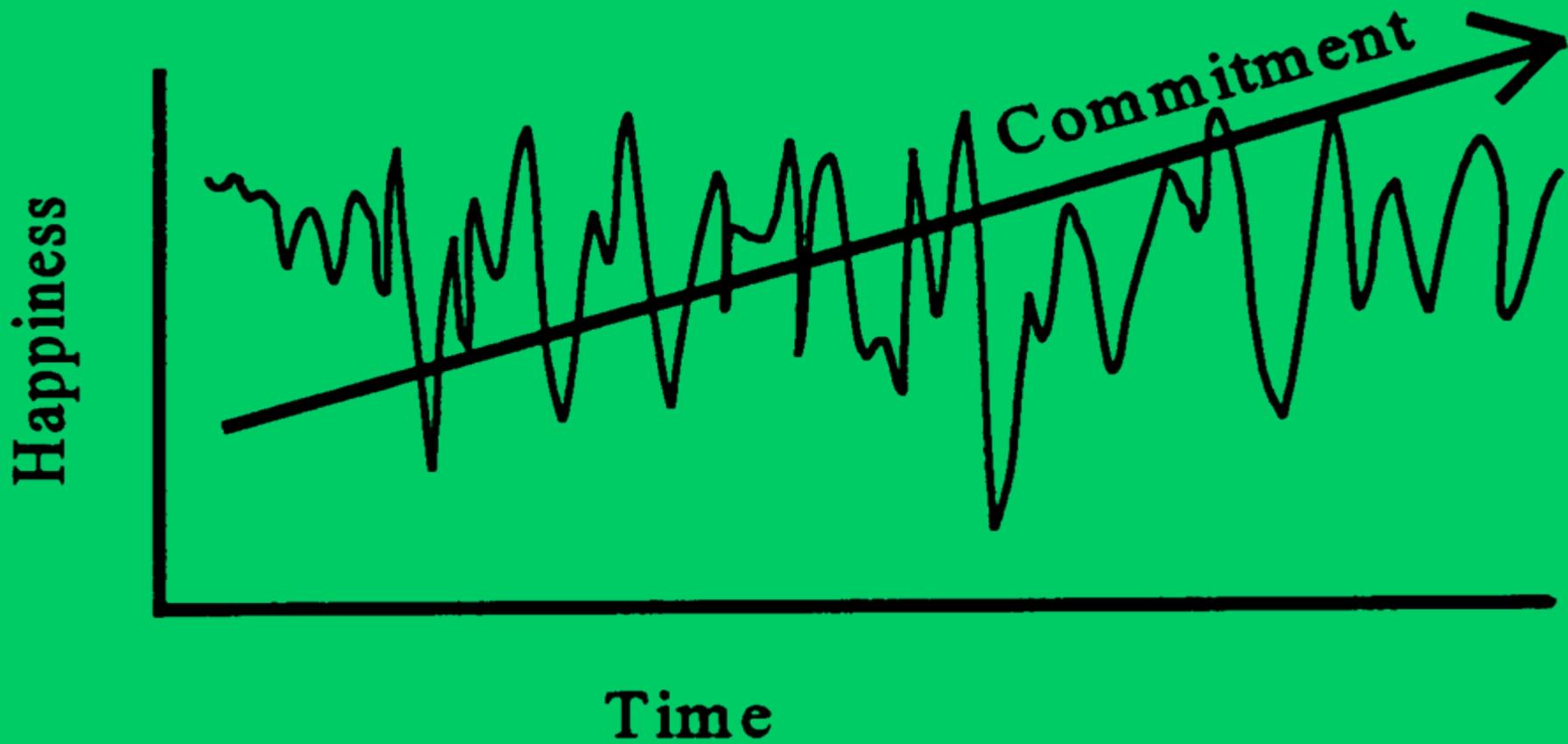
The Long Term View

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- A long-term helps you weather short-term ups and downs in satisfaction that are inevitable.
- Your marriage is a long-term investment
- Do not threaten the Long View when mad
- The Long View must be nurtured.









As We Close, Consider:

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- You can't "have it all," but you can choose to cherish and nurture what you want most in your marriage.
- It's your choice how much you will put into your relationship.





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CONGRATULATIONS!

You have completed viewing this presentation. Continue the training by completing the [PREP Self-study Questions](#).

