

Unit Descriptions

Units	Why it's important	What participants will do	What are the results?
<p>1. The State of Relationships Today</p>	<p>Maintaining thriving romantic relationships is a challenge for us all, but the data shows that this is especially true for those who face financial insecurity and/or those who live in non-committed partnerships.</p> <p>Yet, partnering with another person successfully affects—more than any other single entity—the satisfaction with many other parts of our lives, such as child rearing and employment (WMR, pg. 1).</p> <p>Luckily, research has helped us recognize the most common patterns associated with partnerships that stay together happily and those that disintegrate. Those patterns, then, serve well as strategies for maintaining a safe, healthy and fulfilling relationship with all the people that matter in our lives.</p> <p>Unit-at-a-Glance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ice-Breaker Activity and Discussion 2. Effects of Troubled Relationships 3. Orientation to the Program 	<p>Activity: Relationships Today are Like...is an easy introductory exercise to expose participants' current perspectives on relationships.</p> <p>Activity: Marble demonstration visually represents a model of a healthy relationship built on strong, positive interactions.</p> <p>Activity: Vision Building asks participants to visualize their initial hopes and goals for the next 5-10 years. (They will revisit this statement at the end of the workshop.)</p>	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become oriented to the low-risk, safe environment fostered by Within My Reach. • Recognize that their concerns are normal--common, in fact--concerning successful relationships. • Identify the multifaceted effects that relationships have on other areas of life. • Face a renewed hope in tackling the destructive patterns of relationships by combating them with healthy strategies.
<p>2. Healthy Relationships: What They Are and What They Aren't</p>	<p>Many of us, unfortunately, do not come in contact with as many examples of healthy relationships as we need.</p> <p>Unit-at-a-Glance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is It Safe? An Essential Question 	<p>Activity: Is It Safe? An Essential Question encourages participants to build a sculpture than visually represents a relationship from a description on a card.</p> <p>Activity: Is Your Own Relationship Safe? asks attendees to evaluate their current relationship, if applicable, for the essential qualities of safety.</p>	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are provided with models of healthy relationships. • Discover the backbone of healthy relationships—safety. • Recognize that unsafe relationships are not places to focus attention. • Receive resources for getting out of unsafe relationships.

<p>3. Sliding vs. Deciding</p>	<p>Sliding versus Deciding is a major actionable theme within the workshop because making proactive decisions, rather than simply reacting to events, is a cornerstone of creating your own happiness.</p> <p>Unit-at-a-Glance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Love Pyramid 2. Should We Live Together? 3. Sliding vs. Deciding 	<p>Activity: <i>High Cost Slides</i> shows participants, through examples, the difference between <i>Deciding</i> how to live your life and <i>Sliding</i> into unplanned decisions.</p> <p>Activity: <i>Story: Chris' Testimony</i> offers a 1st-hand account of a man who slid into a decision that impacted his and his daughter's life in dramatic ways.</p>	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn a major recurring theme of the Within My Reach curriculum— Deciding vs. Sliding. • Realize that thoughtful Deciding is more effective than Sliding reactively into decisions. • Explore what the research teaches us about the choice of living together. • Recapture the power of making decisions for themselves.
<p>4. Smart Love</p>	<p>The early stages of love ignite chemicals in the brain that leave us unable to read the warning signs clearly (WMR, p. 75).</p> <p>Unit 4 walks individuals through the common difficulties with and the significance of making smart decisions about love. Using Parrotts' <i>Seven Principles of Smart Love</i>, participants make guided decisions about the viability and health of their relationships.</p> <p>Unit-at-a-Glance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Chemistry of Love—Greasing the Slide 2. Seven Principles of Smart Love 	<p>Activity: <i>Smart Love</i> uses the <i>Seven Principles of Smart Love</i> as a framework for participants to determine how “smart” and “not-so-smart” certain relationship scenarios are.</p> <p>Activity: <i>Examining Relationships—Past or Present</i> is a private exercise that focuses on applying the <i>Seven Principles of Smart Love</i> to participants own relationships.</p>	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice the difficulty of making informed decisions while infatuated with their partner. • Utilize the Seven Principles of Smart Love as a guide for making healthy partner choices.
<p>5. Knowing Yourself First</p>	<p>The healthier an individual is, the more responsibility he/she takes and the better equipped he/she is to choose partners wisely.</p> <p>Additionally, knowing yourself is an essential first step to creating the change that can make us more the person we want to be.</p> <p>Unit-at-a-Glance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Taking Your Own Growth and Development Seriously 2. Learning About Personality Style 3. The Powerful Influence of Family of Origin 4. What to Do About Family Background Patterns 	<p>Activity: <i>Primary Colors Personality Tool</i> -- a personality assessment tool--instigates a close examination of participants' own needs and expectations.</p> <p>Activity: <i>Examining Family Background Patterns</i> proffers another private means of exploring how the past has shaped who we are and what we need.</p>	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess their own personality for an improved sense of what individual needs they bring to any relationship. • Begin a self-exploration process to learn how to identify their own needs honestly. • Conduct a thorough family background that illustrates the origins of their current expectations about relationships. • Carefully consider familial patterns they want to re-

	5. The Legacy of Abuse and Other Childhood Hurts		create from those they want to do differently.
6. Making Your Own Decisions	<p>Our expectations—and the ways in which those expectations are met (or not met) constitute a large part of our happiness and satisfaction in life.</p> <p>The first step to moving toward happiness is to examine those expectations and evaluate their reasonableness.</p> <p>Part of that equation is the research that tells us the different ways in which men and women view commitment and how that shapes their expectations (WMR, p. 120).</p> <p>Unit-at-a-Glance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Powerful Role Expectations Play in Relationships 2. Commitment: Do Men and Women See It Differently? 3. Revisiting Sliding vs. Deciding 	<p>Activity: <i>What’s Reasonable? What’s Unreasonable?</i> asks participants to gauge the reasonableness of several sample expectations.</p> <p>Activity: <i>What Are My Expectations?</i> encourages participants to apply their method of gauging reasonableness to their own expectations.</p> <p>Activity: <i>Making Decisions</i> offers a list of relationship situations that can be dealt with successfully if participants <i>Decide</i> what to do in advance (e.g. sex, having more children, sharing finances).</p>	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share an extended exploration of personal expectations. • Receive the opportunity to rate the reasonableness of their expectations. • Examine the origin of their personal expectations. • Are given the time and structure to begin making important decisions about their relationships. • Discern the varied ways in which women and men often view commitment in the early stages of a relationship.
7. Dangerous Patterns in Relationships	<p>Several key studies indicate that patterns of ineffective communication-- Communication Danger Signsⁱ ⁱⁱ--can ultimately defeat the good intentions of individuals by negating the feeling of safety.</p> <p>However, communication Danger Signs can be diffused if recognized early.</p> <p>Even more severe is the emotional and physical toll of domestic abuse and both types of abuse—physical and intimate terrorism—are explored and discussed.</p> <p>Unit-at-a-Glance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Four Communication Danger Signs 2. Domestic Violence: Conflict, Aggression, and Serious Danger 	<p>Activity: <i>Examples of the Four Communication Danger Signs</i> shows participants how to recognize the communication danger signs in their past interactions.</p> <p>Activity: <i>Couple Communication Quiz</i> focuses attention on a past or current relationship in order to determine the communicative health of those interactions.</p>	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize the Danger Signs of ineffective communication. • Consider and receive feedback on the communication patterns in their own relationships. • Participate in an extended discussion of domestic violence—including the detrimental effects on children. • Distinguish between the violence that spills over from unresolved conflict and the violence that includes threatening and controlling behavior.

<p>8. Where Conflict Begins</p>	<p>According to field research, couples often repeatedly fight about the same Issues, or find themselves sliding into major arguments from simple beginnings. To avoid the “same old argument,” couples often fall victim to avoiding talk altogetherⁱⁱⁱ.</p> <p>Understanding our own Issues is an authentic starting point to solving the <i>real</i> problems more effectively.</p> <p>Unit-at-a-Glance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What Issues Affect Relationships and Marriages Most? 2. Issues and Events Model 3. Conflict’s Effect on Children 	<p>Activity: <i>What Are My Hidden Issues?</i> exposes the deeper Hidden Issues that affect participants’ lives most often and, consequently, fuel conflict with others.</p>	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn how important it is to keep children safe from conflict. • Explore the origins of conflict. • Face their own Issues in proactive ways. • Deepen communicative connection with partners by sharing the Issues that instigate most conflict.
<p>9. Smart Communication</p>	<p>Recognizing the danger signs of communication is only part of the battle. The next step is learning to diffuse them with proven strategies—Time Out and XYZ Statements.</p> <p>Unit-at-a-Glance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Time Out: A Way to Stop Escalation 2. Complaining and Gripping—Being Heard, Not Ignored 3. A Better Way: Using XYZ Statements 	<p>Activity: <i>Thanking Others</i> challenges attendees to practice offering positive feedback using XYZ statements.</p>	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace detrimental communicative habits with proactive talking strategies. • Understand the value of taking a Time Out to discourage unhealthy exchanges. • Practice making positive, encouraging statements using the XYZ structure.
<p>10. The Speaker Listener Technique</p>	<p>Research strongly indicates that when people feel safe enough to share their thoughts, as opposed to feeling attacked or ignored, they are better able and willing to talk about their issues honestly^{iv}.</p> <p>The speaker/listener technique helps diffuse the Communication Danger Signs that breed animosity so that speakers can feel safe enough to slow down and listen carefully to one another.</p> <p>Unit-at-a-Glance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Speaker Listener Technique: Introduction and Practice 	<p>Activity: <i>Practicing the Speaker Listener Technique</i> reinforces the ground rules for the Speaker Listener Technique by asking participants to practice using the Ground Rules in a low-risk scenario.</p>	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and reinforce a proven effective model of communication—the Speaker Listener Technique. • Reinforce Emotional Safety through honest and open discussion. • Review the Ground Rules for Good Communication learned in Units 7-10.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. When to Use the Speaker Listener Technique and With Whom 3. Problem Solving 4. Ground Rules for Good Communication 		
11. Infidelity, Distrust and Forgiveness	<p>Infidelity is more common among those who live together, without a marriage commitment, and those who are economically disadvantaged.</p> <p>People need to see the benefits of making commitments and seeing them through as well as learn to differentiate between <i>forgiveness</i> and <i>restoration</i> in situations where trust has been breached.</p> <p>Unit-at-a-Glance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Where’s Your Head At? 2. Infidelity? 3. Forgiveness and (Maybe) Making Up 	<p>Activity: <i>Questioning Infidelity</i> asks small groups of participants to explore the meaning of and the reasons for infidelity.</p>	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asks individuals to carefully consider their own responsibility in a relationship—are they playin’ or stayin’? • Determine the conditions that inform whether to forgive and/or to restore the relationship post-breach. • Face the reasons to hold themselves to the same standards they expect of a partner.
12. Commitment: Why it Matters to Adults and Children	<p>Long-term life satisfaction is a product of commitment, according to scores of research efforts^v.</p> <p>The benefits of a healthy, committed partnership are significant to both participants, as well as, children. The teamwork, the additional resources, the added community support and attention—all work together to support partners and their children more satisfactorily.</p> <p>Unit-at-a-Glance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Two Types of Commitment 2. Walking the Talk: Priorities and Sacrifice 3. What Commitment Means to Children 4. Why Healthy Marriage Matters to Children 	<p>Activity: <i>Talking about Sacrifice</i> directs participants to discuss their experiences with sacrificing <i>too much</i> in relationships and with sacrificing <i>too little</i>, using the Speaker Listener Technique.</p> <p>Activity: <i>Walking the Talk: Priorities and Sacrifice</i> asks participants to brainstorm things they plan to do to make a significant person in their lives feel loved.</p>	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn to make healthy sacrifices. • Appreciate the advantage of making a commitment to their partner for long-term satisfaction. • Recognize the significance of commitment on children’s well-being.
13. Stepfamilies and the Significance of Fathers	<p>Research shows that most fights between couples begin with the two biggest stressors: money and parenting^{vi}. Step-parenting creates additional challenges that require</p>	<p>Activity: <i>What Does it Mean to Be a Good Father?</i> undertakes the challenge of visually representing-- in the form</p>	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive specific suggestions on making “new families” or stepfamilies work.

	<p>extended examination and patient discussion^{vii}.</p> <p>This unit also explores the considerable influence that an involved father has on the lives of their children (WMR, pg. 247).</p> <p>Unit-at-a-Glance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Making New Families Work 2. What Roles Do Fathers Play? 	<p>of a sculpture-- the role of a father with his son and his daughter.</p> <p>Activity: <i>The Barbie Doll House Story</i> uses narration to depict the negative consequences for a family where the father-child connection has been lost.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the acknowledged negative consequences of an absent or abusive father. • Recognize the importance of the father-child relationship to children-- both boys and girls.
14. Making the Tough Decisions	<p>All relationships face stress and challenge, even happy couples (pg. 258). Those that decide to stick together through the challenges have, according to the research, been ultimately happy with that decision (WMR, pg. 257).</p> <p>Still, the choices are tough and sometimes the better choice is breaking up, though that can also be a challenge.</p> <p>Finally, the lessons here focus on the importance of self-esteem, social support and financial independence in life.</p> <p>Unit-at-a-Glance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hanging in There When You Think It's Probably Worth It, but Times are Tough 2. How to Really Break Up (When You Decide It's Time) 3. What You Need to Make the Tough Decisions 	<p>Activity: <i>Lingering Relationships</i> identifies the negative impact of allowing non-committed relationships to linger.</p> <p>Activity: <i>Is Taking A Break From Relationships a Good Idea?</i> details the decision of one woman to take a break from relationships entirely. Following the story, attendees discuss the benefits and the detriments that her decision might include.</p> <p>Activity: <i>Taking Stock of Supports in My Life</i> shifts the focus to help attendees identify the supportive people in their lives, strengthen support systems and consider ways to give back to their communities.</p>	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the systems of community support available to them. • Design ways to thrive in their community through receiving support and giving back. • Are reminded to focus on self-esteem, social support and financial independence to the idea of taking a relationship break. • Explore the difficulties involved with dragging out a break-up.
15. Reaching Into Your Future	<p>Participants come full circle by this final unit in the <i>Within My Reach</i> curriculum.</p> <p>For closure, they return to their Unit 1 vision statement in order to revise based on what they've learned throughout the workshop.</p> <p>Then, they discuss barriers to reaching their relationship goals and come together as a group to brainstorm concrete steps to take to</p>	<p>Activity: <i>Considering Barriers to Marriage and/or Relationship Goals</i> assesses the barriers to the goals participants have set for current and/or future relationships, then as a group, brainstorms the means of overcoming those barriers.</p> <p>Activity: <i>Revisiting Your Vision</i> presents attendees</p>	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise their original Vision Statement (Unit 1). • Note the barriers to their relationship goals. • Brainstorm concrete steps to take to make their visions happen.

	<p>overcome barriers and ensure that their visions become their reality.</p> <p>Unit-at-a-Glance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Barriers to Marriage and Other Relationship Goals 2. Closing Comments 	<p>with the opportunity to revisit their vision statement, make revisions and begin to <i>Decide</i> the appropriate actions to realize those goals.</p>	
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ⁱ Clements, M. L., Stanley, S. M., & Markman, H. J. (2004). Before they said "I do": Discriminating among marital outcomes over 13 years based on premarital data. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 66*, 613-626.; Gottman, J. M. (1993). The roles of conflict engagement, Escalation or avoidance in marital interaction: A longitudinal view of five types of couples. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 61*, 6B15.; Markman, H.J., & Hahlweg, K. (1993). The prediction and prevention of marital distress: An international perspective. *Clinical Psychology Review, 13*, 29-43.; Matthews, L. S., Wickrama, K. A. S., & Conger, R. D. (1996). Predicting marital instability from spouse and observer reports of marital interaction. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 58*, 641-655.; Stanley, S. M., Markman, H. J., & Whitton, S. (2002). Communication, conflict, and commitment: Insights on the foundations of relationship success from a national survey. *Family Process, 41*, 659-675.

ⁱⁱ One of the studies that most strongly shows the risk of invalidation for a relationship over time is: Clements, M. L., Stanley, S. M., & Markman, H. J. (2004). Before they said "I do": Discriminating among marital outcomes over 13 years based on premarital data. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 66*, 613-626.

ⁱⁱⁱ Stanley, S. M., Markman, H. J., & Whitton, S. (2002). Communication, conflict, and commitment: Insights on the foundations of relationship success from a national survey. *Family Process, 41*, 659-675. See also: Storaasli, R. D., & Markman, H. J. (1990). Relationship problems in the early stages of marriage: A longitudinal investigation. *Journal of Family Psychology, 4*, 80-98.

^{iv} See any of the PREP books for full discussions of this and other points here: Markman, H.J., Stanley, S.M., & Blumberg, S.L. (2001) *Fighting for Your Marriage*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.; Markman, H.J., Stanley, S.M., Blumberg, S.L., Jenkins, N. H., & Whiteley, C. (2004). *12 Hours to a Great Marriage*. New York: Wiley and Sons.; Jenkins, N. H., Stanley, S. M., Bailey, W. C., & Markman, H. J. (2002). *You paid how much for that?! How to win at money without losing at love*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, Inc.; Stanley, S., Trathen, D., McCain, S., & Bryan, M. (1998). *A lasting promise: A Christian guide to Fighting for Your Marriage*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, Inc.

^v Johnson, C. A., Stanley, S. M., Glenn, N. D., Amato, P. A., Nock, S. L., Markman, H. J., & Dion, M. R. (2002). *Marriage in Oklahoma: 2001 baseline statewide survey on marriage and divorce* (S02096 OKDHS). Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma Department of Human Services.; see also Waite, L. J., Browning, D., Doherty, W. J., Gallagher, M., Lou, Y., & Stanley, S. M. (2002). *Does divorce make people happy? Findings from a study of unhappy marriages*. New York: Institute for American Values.

^{vi} Stanley, S. M., Markman, H. J., & Whitton, S. W. (2002). Communication, conflict and commitment: Insights on the foundations of relationship success from a national survey. *Family Process, 41*(4), 659-675.

^{vii} Adapted from Papernow, P., & Adler-Baeder, F. (November, 2002). Seven tips for successful stepparenting. *Your Stepfamily Magazine*. Used by permission.