



Dr. Tabitha's
MARRIAGE PREP COURSE

Course Workbook

Standard Version





Premarital Workbook

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Lesson 1: Expectations

Lesson Overview

So you're getting married...congrats! Learn more about you and your partner's expectations about life after "I do."

Lesson Videos

Click [here](#) to watch video 1

Click [here](#) to watch video 2

Discussion Questions

Take some time before you begin to think about and discuss the questions below:

1. What are you most excited to learn about in this course?
2. What do you and your partner hope to gain in through this?
3. What do you think is the biggest strength in your relationship right now?
4. What do you think is the biggest weakness in your relationship right now?

Activity

Everyone comes into their marriage with preconceptions of “the way things are supposed to be.” As a matter of fact many couples just assume their partner feels the same way without the benefit of ever talking to them about it. Don’t assume anything. Have the conversation.

The following questions are designed to stimulate conversation regarding some of the important decisions and expectations that you have regarding your life together.

Fundamentals: These questions are a good foundation to make sure you and your fiancé are on the same page when it comes to your marriage.

1. What does marriage mean to you?
2. What did you learn about marriage growing up?
3. Did you have a positive marriage model (a friend or family member who had the kind of marriage that you’d like to have?)
 - a. What are the things that you’d like to replicate from those friends/family members in your own marriage?
 - b. Any patterns or aspects of their marriage that you want to avoid?
4. Many marriage vows contain, “Til death do us part.” Is our marriage made for a lifetime?
 - a. Are we both committed until Death?
 - b. Is there anything that could change that for either of us?
5. What are the non--negotiables in our marriage? (sexual infidelity, emotional infidelity, physical or verbal abuse, etc.)
6. Do you expect our love today to be the same 10/20/30/50 years from now? If not, how do you think it may change?
7. How will we make major decisions in life: as a team, or as independent individuals? Will one of us have more say than the other in specific areas of life (i.e.,finances,children, work, etc.)?
8. What is your calling or purpose in life? Mine? How do those things work together?

Faith: What is it that shapes who you are and what core principles do you want as your marriage foundation?

1. What do you believe as it relates to your faith / spirituality / or core beliefs?
2. How important is your faith / spirituality / core beliefs as it relates to our life together?
3. Will we attend church/ religious activities? Will we do it together? Where? What denomination?
4. Are there differences in what we believe? What are those differences? How will those differences impact our future?
5. How will our marriage be shaped by our core beliefs / faith / spirituality?
6. What traditions of your faith are important to you and what traditions do you want to be part of our future together? (holiday, rituals, practices, or expectations)
7. What will we teach our children? How will we raise them?

Finances: Have a frank conversation about your finances.

1. What do you owe?
2. What savings do you have?
3. What recurring expenses will you be bringing into the relationship? (student loans, alimony, child support, ect...)
4. What is your financial past? (judgments or liens, bankruptcy, or slow to pay)
5. Will you combine your finances or keep separate accounts?
6. Who will take the lead on paying bills and keeping financial documents straight?
7. What are your plans for your financial future? (savings, investments, insurance, power of attorney, wills ,and inheritances)
8. Have you considered a budget for your combined finances?

Feelings and Fighting: It is a guarantee that you will have disagreements. When you do, you want to be able to discuss those feelings and issues in a safe manner for you both.

1. How emotionally dependent are you on one another?
2. How do I need to nurture you (support you) emotionally during the following times:
 - a. Good times
 - b. Times of loss
 - c. When we argue
 - d. When times are hard
3. How important is loyalty to you? What does it mean to you?

4. When we have disagreements, how do you want to communicate to one another?
5. What are your hot buttons to avoid when we argue?
6. How well do you “forgive and forget?”
7. What are your expectations about each other’s forgiveness?
8. When it comes to sharing your feelings, how much of what you are feeling do you want to share? How much are you expected to share?

Fun: Fun and friendships are the foundations of a great marriage.

1. What do you like to do for fun? Is it important that I enjoy your pastimes too?
2. How involved do you want me to be in your hobbies?
3. How much time do you expect to spend doing your hobbies?
4. What percentage of time would you like for us to spend alone together (versus spending time together with friends, family, associates, and etc.)?
5. What will our friendship together look like? What do you want to spend time doing together?
6. How much time do you want to spend with other friends away from one another? What is not enough & what is too much?
7. What are your expectations of one another when it comes to friends and co-workers of the opposite sex?
8. What are your expectations when it comes to friendship with ex-partners? Is it ok to maintain relationships with them on social media?
9. How do you wish to celebrate special occasions (birthdays, anniversaries, Valentine’s day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc.)? What are your expectations of gift values and, or traditions to be upheld?

Family: You are about to become a family. What will your family look like in the future?

1. Do you want kids? If yes:
 - a. How many?
 - b. When would you like to have kids?
 - c. Will either spouse reduce/ eliminate their workload to take care of children at home?
2. If you have kids from a previous marriage or relationship:
 - a. What are the expectations when it comes to discipline and visitation expectations?
 - b. How involved do you expect one another to be with the mother or father of that child?
 - c. How involved do you want your spouse to be in regards to disciplining the children?
3. In-laws:

- a. What is acceptable involvement of in-laws or extended family in your marriage and relationship? (What is too much and what is not enough?)
- b. How often can they visit us/ we visit them?
- c. What type of information do you not want shared with them (i.e., arguments, finances, sex conversations)?
- 4. Power & Boundaries:
 - a. How important is the family dynamic and what is the “pecking order” (does your husband/wife come before your parents? Before your children?)
 - b. How will that information be communicated to family members?

The Real Fun (SEX): Sex binds a couple together in so many ways. It is important to know you and your partner’s sexual expectations.

1. What are your sexual expectations in marriage?
2. How often would you like to have sex realistically?
3. What does sex look like after the first year of marriage, the 5th year, the 10th year, etc.?
4. What is acceptable or wanted from me, regarding sex and romance?
5. What is forbidden?
6. How important is romance in the relationship? What does romance mean to you?

Future: A wedding lasts a day, but marriage lasts a lifetime. What does the future look like around your house?

1. What do you expect of one another when it comes to career choices, and the division of labor?
2. What do you expect in regards to income? How much money would you like to be making each year? Do you expect for us to make the same amount of money? Will it matter if one spouse makes more?
3. When it comes to dealing with certain issues, who has the “final say” to make the decision? (i.e. - who will discipline the kids, control the money, etc.) What happens when you disagree with one another regarding these issues, and how will you ultimately solve the disagreement?)
4. What does the division of household labor look like? Specifically, who will:
 - a. Vacuum the house
 - b. Clean the house
 - c. Maintain the exterior of the home
 - d. Cut the grass

- e. Clean the bathroom
 - f. Wash laundry
 - g. Service the vehicles
 - h. Create the budget
 - i. Provide income
 - j. Update the checkbook
 - k. Pay the bills
 - l. Make major purchases
 - m. Plan social schedule
 - n. Care for kids
 - o. Discipline kids
 - p. Teach morals to the kids
5. Everyone seems to have little things that drive them crazy in both good and in bad ways. Unfortunately, it is often the little things that cause the biggest issues. So, if you know what the hot buttons are today, get them out of the way now. For example, toilet seat up or down? The proper way to use toothpaste? The proper way to hang the toilet paper?... What lights your fire? What puts it out?

Lesson 2: Friendship & Fun

Lesson Overview

Friendship is one of the most important components of a successful relationship. In this lesson, learn how to keep friendship & fun alive in your marriage.

Lesson Videos

Click [here](#) to watch video 1

Click [here](#) to watch video 2

Discussion Questions

After you've watched the videos, grab a pen and some paper to jot down notes, and have the following conversation with your partner:

1. What are the most enjoyable, interesting, fun things we have done together so far?
2. What would you like to do together in the next few weeks? Create a list. Use your imagination. Put these ideas in a jar and pull them out randomly for your date nights.
3. In the next few years?
4. In the next 20-30 years? Dream big!

Note: It's important for you to discuss and agree on things to do that are mutually enjoyable.

Activity

How well do you know your partner?

Knowing little facts about your partner indicates a deep connection to them and knowledge about them. Research has shown when couples have this deep knowledge they are better able to stay connected to each other in times of stress or dramatic changes!

Go through these questions and see how many you can guess for your partner and then have them do the same for you! There is no score sheet for this, but rather view it as a chance to learn new things about your partner and further deepen that connection!

1. Who are my two best friends?	16. Name my favorite color.
2. Who is my favorite artist or musical group	17. What is my favorite type of gift to receive?
3. When you first saw me, what was I wearing?	18. Name a childhood experience I enjoyed most.
4. What is one of my hobbies?	19. Of the vacations I have taken, which one has been my favorite?
5. What city/town was I born in?	20. What is my favorite form of relaxation?
6. What is currently a stressor in my life?	21. Other than you, who is my biggest supporter?
7. Share in detail what I did today or yesterday.	22. Which sport is my favorite?
8. What is my birthday?	23. Where would I go on my dream vacation?
9. When is our anniversary?	24. What is my dream job?
10. Which relative am I closest to?	25. Which holiday is my favorite to celebrate?
11. When I am not working, what do I like to do?	26. What is a concern or worry I have?
12. Name one of my biggest fears.	27. Name my childhood best friend.
13. What time of the day is my favorite for lovemaking?	28. Name my most embarrassing moment.
14. What is something that makes me feel competent.	29. Who are two people I really admire?
15. What sexually arouses me?	30. What is one of my favorite things to eat?

Adapted from The Gottman Institute "Love Maps"

Lesson 3: Emotional, Physical & Sexual Fulfillment

Lesson Overview

Knowing your partner's needs, and the actions that make him/her feel most loved is important to keep a marriage healthy. Discover more about your partner's needs in this lesson.

Lesson Videos

Click [here](#) to watch video 1

Discussion Questions

1. How do you feel about having conversations regarding emotional, physical, and sexual fulfillment? Is it difficult for you to tell me what you need? Why or why not?
2. Once we're married, what do you expect the quantity of our sex life to be?
3. Once we're married, what do you expect the quality of our sex life to be?
4. Do you feel I'm adequately meeting your emotional needs? What could I do better?
5. Share with your partner your models for marriage and relationships (ie., parents, grandparents, friends, etc.). Specifically, how did they show affection? Do you feel they were very emotionally connected? Were they very physically and sexually connected?
6. How do these models impact you and your expectations for marriage?
7. How different are your models for relationships compared to your partners? What potential issues might this cause?

Activity

Discovering your “Love Language”

Dr. Gary Chapman, author of “The 5 Love Languages”, created the profiles below which both consist of 30 pairs of statements. Circle the one statement in each pair that best represents your desire. Your partner may or may not do some of these, but if they did, which would you prefer? Once you’ve made your selections, go back and count the number of times you circled each individual letter and write in the appropriate blank at the end of the profile. There are two quizzes below, one for husbands, and one for wives, please scroll down to find the appropriate quiz for you!

This quiz is designed for husbands to complete:

1	A E	I wish my wife would send me a love note (or text or email) for no special reason. I would like more hugs from my wife.	6	E A	I wish my wife would sit close to me more often. I feel loved when my wife tells me, “You look good.”
2	B D	I would like to spend more time alone with my wife, just the two of us. I enjoy working around the house with my wife.	7	B C	I wish my wife and I could spend more time together Even the smallest gift from my wife is important to me
3	C B	Receiving special gifts from my wife makes me happy – I wish she would do it more! One of my favorite things is traveling with my wife.	8	A D	I would love it if my wife could say, “I’m proud of you.” When my wife cooks a nice meal for me, I feel very loved
4	D E	I would like my wife to run errands or put gas in my car. I wish my wife would touch me more.	9	B A	No matter what we do, I love doing things with my wife. I wish my wife would say more supportive things to me.
5	E C	I wish my wife would sometimes put her arm around me when we are with others Every now and then I’d like to get a surprise gift from my wife.	10	D E	Little things my wife does for me mean more than things she says. My wife and I need to hug more.

11	B E	I like going places with my wife – even the grocery store! I like to hold my wife’s hand.	19	A C	I would love to hear more praise from my wife. It means a lot to me when my wife gives me gifts I really like.
12	C A	I value the gifts my wife gives me. I would love to hear my wife say the actual words, “I love you,” more often.	20	B E	I wish my wife and I could spend more time together. I would like a back rub from my wife sometime.
13	A D	I wish my wife would be more enthusiastic about something I’ve accomplished. I wish my wife would help me with tasks, even those she dislikes.	21	C D	It would be nice if when my wife takes a trip, she would bring me a little gift. I wish my wife would sometime surprise me by helping me with a chore I dislike.
14	E B	I never get tired of my wife’s kisses. I wish my wife would show more interest in things I like to do, even though they might not be her “thing.”	22	B C	It bothers me when my wife interrupts me. I never get tired of receiving gifts from my wife.
15	D C	I would like my wife to work with me on projects. I wish my wife would get more excited about gifts from me.	23	D B	I want my wife to help me out when I’m tired. I wish my wife was as enthusiastic about going places as I am.
16	A B	I love it when my wife compliments my appearance. I wish my wife wouldn’t jump in to criticize my ideas rather than hearing me out.	24	E C	I love having sex with my wife. I like it when my wife goes to the store and picks up little things she knows I’ll like.
17	E D	I can’t help but touch my wife when she’s close by. I wish my wife would now and then run errands for me when I’m busy.	25	A B	I wish my wife would be more encouraging I love to watch movies with my wife
18	D C	At times, when I’m feeling swamped at work, I wish my wife would see that and do more around the house. If my wife gives me a gift, I would like her to put thought into choosing it	26	C E	If I received a gift from my wife, I would feel appreciated. I just can’t keep my hands off my wife

27	B	I wish my wife would give me her full attention when we're talking, and not look away or check her phone.	29	D	I know my wife is busy, but sometimes I would love it if she would help me with things I have to do.
	D	Keeping the house clean is an important act of service.		A	I would really like it if my wife sometimes said, "I appreciate you."
28	C	I look forward to seeing what my wife gives me for my birthday	30	E	I love embracing my wife after we've been apart for a while.
	A	I know my wife loves me, but I wish she would tell me more often what I mean to her.		A	I want to hear my wife say she believes in me

This quiz is designed for wives to complete:

1	A	I would love to get a funny email from my husband.	6	E	I like for my husband to sit close to me.
	E	I wish my husband would hug me more.		A	When I'm all dressed up, I wish my husband would compliment me
2	B	I like to be alone with my husband.	7	B	Spending time with my husband makes me happy.
	D	I wish sometime my husband would take my car to be washed, or do some other act of service without being asked.		C	I wish my husband would give me more small gifts that still mean something.
3	C	I would love for my husband to bring me a special gift, no occasion needed.	8	A	I would like to hear my husband say he's proud of me.
	B	I enjoy long trips with my husband.		D	I wish my husband would help clean up without being told
4	D	I would feel really loved if my husband did the laundry.	9	B	No matter what we do, I love doing things with my husband.
	E	I like it when my husband touches me.		A	I would like to hear more supportive words from my husband.
5	E	I would like my husband to put his arm around me sometimes when we are in public.	10	D	I wish my husband would not only say nice things to me, but do nice things for me.
	C	I wish my husband would bring me gifts when he travels.		E	I love to hug my husband.

11	B E	I wish my husband was more enthusiastic about getting out and going places. I like to hold my husband's hand.	18	A C	I wish my husband would praise me more often. I wish my husband would give me gifts that are more thoughtful and personal.
12	C A	I feel loved when my husband gives me gifts I know he loves me, but I want to hear my husband say it.	19	B E	Just being around my husband makes me feel good. I wish my husband would give me a massage.
13	A D	If my husband would react positively to my accomplishments, that would be encouraging. I wish my husband would help me with tasks that he doesn't enjoy – just because he knows it would mean a lot to me .	20	C D	I wish my husband gave me gifts more often. I wish my husband would help me, without my having to ask.
14	E B	I never get tired of my husband's kisses. I want my husband to show more interest in things I care about.	21	B C	It bothers me when my husband interrupts me when I'm talking. I never get tired of receiving gifts from my husband.
15	D C	I feel loved when my husband helps me with projects. I still get excited when opening a gift from my husband.	22	D B	I would like for my husband to offer to help me when I'm tired. It doesn't matter where we go, I just like going places with my husband.
16	A B	I wish my husband would compliment me on my appearance more often. I want my husband to listen to me more and respect my ideas.	23	E C	I wish my husband and I cuddled more. I wish my husband would surprise me with a gift more often.
17	E D	I can't help but touch my husband when he's close by. When I have a lot of errands to run, I wish my husband would sometimes offer to help.	24	A B	My husband's encouraging words give me confidence. I love to watch movies with my husband.

25	D	I would feel like giving my husband an award if he helped me around the house.	28	C	I wish my husband would give me a gift for no reason.
	C	I would feel loved if my husband's gifts showed signs of thoughtfulness.		E	I would love it if my husband touched me more.
26	B	I wish my husband would give me his undivided attention when I'm talking to him and not play with his phone.	29	D	It means a lot to me when my husband helps me despite being busy.
	D	I would love for my husband to help clean the house.		A	I wish my husband would say, "I appreciate you."
27	C	I look forward to seeing what my husband gives me for my birthday.	30	E	I love embracing with my husband after we've been apart for a while.
	A	I want to hear my husband say how much I mean to him.		A	I want to hear my husband say he misses me when I'm gone.

Scoring:

Score up how many of each letter you circled, the one with the highest number is which "love language" you speak. This the primary way that you like to receive love. If there are two numbers that are similarly high, you may be "bilingual", or have a secondary "love language".

For Husbands

- A: _____ WORDS OF AFFIRMATION
- B: _____ QUALITY TIME
- C: _____ RECEIVING GIFTS
- D: _____ ACTS OF SERVICE
- E: _____ PHYSICAL TOUCH

For Wives

- A: _____ WORDS OF AFFIRMATION
- B: _____ QUALITY TIME
- C: _____ RECEIVING GIFTS
- D: _____ ACTS OF SERVICE
- E: _____ PHYSICAL TOUCH

Lesson 4: Communication

Lesson Overview

Sometimes, messages get lost in translation between partners. Learn a few simple techniques to make sure that you are speaking the same language.

Lesson Videos

Click [here](#) to watch video 1

Click [here](#) to watch video 2

Discussion Questions

1. What stood out in this lesson for you? For me?
2. Does social media and technology get in the way of our ability to communicate? If so, how and how can we prevent this in the future?
3. Are we comfortable asking each other for what we need in situations of happiness and in situations of stress?
4. What type of conversations do we have more of, “report” or “rapport”?
5. What’s one area of communication in which we need to improve?

Six Questions to continue connecting:

Discuss these questions now, and keep them handy to use these throughout your marriage—on a weekly or daily basis as a template for communication.

1. What information do I need to share? What information do you need to share?
2. What needs to change with me? (Behaviorally)
3. What are some of your hopes and dreams? (This can be for something in the near future, like next week, or for something years to come.)
4. Know your partner's love languages.
 - a. Ask your partner to gauge their love tank– (scale of 1-10, 1 being on empty, and 10 being completely full).
 - b. How full is your love tank right now? (This helps both of you know how connected each of you are to one another).
5. What can I do to better fill your love tank?
6. (If you're a person of faith) How can I pray for you? Or, how can I better help or support you right now?

Activity

Establish a Ritual for Stress-Reducing Conversation

Research shows that one of the best things a couple can do for their marriage is to establish a ritual of regular conversation for coping with everyday stress and occasional sadness. This is the time when you catch up, focus on each other, swap stories, and show support.

Such conversations can help you to manage pressure, anxiety, and sadness due to problems at your job or in difficult relationships with relatives and friends. Meaningful conversations can help you to handle life's challenges while staying emotionally connected. Think of it as being like a regular trip to the bank; your goal here is to make deposits in your "emotional bank account."

Use the following instructions and questions to design a conversation ritual for you and your partner. Try it a few times and then evaluate how it's going. Make adjustments as needed to design a ritual that works for you.

1. Designate fifteen to thirty minutes each day to talk about your day.

You may already do this to some extent. But we suggest that you make it intentional. You may want to attach the conversation to some other activity that you do day in and day out -- something like eating breakfast together , commuting, taking a walk, or sharing coffee after dinner. The idea is to commit to making the conversation a *significant part* of that experience.

What is the best time of day for you to have a stress-reducing conversation with your partner? _____

Where is the best place to have it?

2. Do it the same way every time.

Examples: Sit at the same table, light a candle, use the same two matching coffee mugs. The idea is to make it feel like "a ritual," something you do together every day to feel connected to each other.

What elements will you use in your conversation ritual?

3. Eliminate distractions.

Turn off the television. Let the phone ring. If you have small children, arrange for them to be involved in some other activity (sleeping is nice) so Mom and Dad can talk.

How will you make sure you've got each other's full attention?

4. Take turns talking and listening.

Discuss the most important things that have happened to you since the last time you talked. What transpired at work? What did the doctor say? How was your class? Did you talk to your mom? Make sure that each partner gets equal time to talk about his or her day. At first, you can use a clock to time it. Later on, sharing the floor will come naturally.

What are likely topics for each of you in these conversations?

5. Show support for your partner as you listen.

- Demonstrate genuine interest by asking questions: "How did it go?" "What was the most important part?" "How do you feel about that?" "What did that mean to you?" "Tell me everything that happened."
- Communicate understanding: "I can understand why you feel that way." "I'd be stressed out, too." "So it sounds like you're worried."
- Listen for emotion and respond in kind: "That's really sad." "I can see why you're angry." "Wow, that's exciting!" "I'd be tense in that situation, too."
- Celebrate your partner's success: "That's wonderful!" "I'm so proud of you!" "I'll bet you're so relieved."
- Take your partner's side in conflicts: "That guy is a total jerk." "How could she treat you like that?" (Remember, this is not the time for the listener to complain or criticize the speaker. And don't side with the enemy!)
- Show solidarity: "This is our problem and we will face it together." "I can understand because something similar happened to me."
- Offer help with problem solving: "Let's figure this out." But remember, understanding must come before advice. Don't rush to problem solve. Listening is the most important part.

6. Evaluate your experience.

After practicing a few days, analyze how the conversation is working. Ask these questions:

- Is the time and place working for you?
 - If not, do you need to make adjustments to your schedule so you can make it work?
 - Are you able to avoid distractions?
 - Are there any elements you'd like to add to make it more satisfying?
 - Do you feel that your partner is sharing his or her experiences?
 - Do you feel that your partner is listening to you?
 - What changes, if any, would you like to make in your ritual?
-
-

Gottman, J. M. & Gottman, J. S. (2006). *10 Lessons to Transform Your Marriage*. New York: Three Rivers Press.

Lesson 5: Managing Conflict

Lesson Overview

The way we argue is more important than what we argue about. Learn how to fight fair in this lesson.

Lesson Videos

Click [here](#) for video 1

Click [here](#) for video 2

Discussion Questions

1. What part of this lesson stood out you?
2. Do I use any of the warning signs during conflict? Do you?
3. Is there a pattern to when/how we use these warning signs? (i.e., you become critical, so I get defensive, then escalation begins for a while. Eventually you withdraw.)
4. What can each of us do to change this pattern?
5. Do we need a time out plan?
6. If so, what's our code word that let's each of us know that it's time to take a break?
 - a. Where will you go?
 - b. Where will I go?
 - c. What will each of us do to relax?
 - d. When will we come back together to discuss?

Activity

State of Relationship Questionnaire

Please go through the questionnaire below and answer each question. **This should be completed by each partner separately.** After you are finished, add up your score and turn to the next page for feedback.

Use the following scale to rate how often you and your partner experience the following: **1 = rarely 2 = occasionally 3 = often**

- 1 2 3** Small disagreements quickly escalate into large arguments in which name calling, sarcasm, eye rolling, blaming, or ignoring occurs
- 1 2 3** My partner looks down on or criticizes my feelings, wants, or ideas.
- 1 2 3** My partner has a misconstrued view of me and often only sees the negative side of what I am trying to do.
- 1 2 3** It feels like my partner and I are on opposing teams
- 1 2 3** When my partner complains, I have to stop myself from saying what I really feel.
- 1 2 3** I often wonder about dating other people or being with someone other than my partner.
- 1 2 3** I don't feel like I have a true best friend or partner in this relationship
- 1 2 3** During an argument, I think it is best just not to respond at all, or I just stop listening.

Who tends to withdraw more when there is a fight or argument?

- I do
- My partner does
- Both withdraw
- Neither withdraw

Directions: Add all the points you scored on this scale, then use the key on this page.

What is the state of your relationship now?

There is no exact formula of the perfect relationship, however this questionnaire can give you a good idea of what the state of your relationship is now. Although the lower the score is the better, that does not mean that if you score higher on this that your relationship is destined to fail. A higher score does indicate that there may be some things that you both need to work on, and if those changes are not made your relationship could be at risk.

8 to 12 “Green Light”

If you scored in the 8 – 12 range, your relationship is in a good spot right now! But don't take that as an excuse to relax. You and your partner are working together and seem to be able to respect and support each other at this point. However in the future situations and circumstances can change and you want to make sure your relationship does not suffer due to those things. Think about it like this, your relationship is traveling at a great speed and going through green lights, no need to stop or slow down, but make sure you keep up what you're doing and checking in with your partner so you don't "run out of gas".

13 to 17 “Yellow Light”

If you scored in the 13 – 17 range, think of it as if you are coming to a "yellow light." You and your partner may need to be cautious and think about slowing down. A score between 13 and 17 indicates there are some warning signs that you don't want to get worse. Slowing down together and looking at parts of your relationship to improve and strengthen will help you protect the good things you already have in your relationship while also giving you the space and time to change or stop the not so good.

18 to 24 “Red Light”

Lastly, if you scored the the range of 18 - 24, it may be time to stop at this red light. This score is indicative of the presence of behaviors or thoughts that can be very dangerous to a relationship. You may soon , if you do not already, feel the effect of these things. But, there is hope! You and your partner can stop at this light and learn tools and techniques to improve your relationship and get back on the road!

Adapted from Stanley and Markman,"Relationship Dynamics Scale".

Extra Resource:

Communication Barriers

Below you will find a list of four common communication barriers that Dr. Johnson references in the video. If all four of these are regularly occurring in a relationship, it has been found that the couple has a significantly higher chance of divorce. However, there are what we refer to as antidotes to each of these four behaviors. When these are put into action, the relationship can get back on track.

1. Criticism

You will always have some complaints about the person you love. A complaint addresses a specific action at which your partner failed. A criticism adds on some negative words about your mate's character or personality. Criticism throws in blame and character assassination. Usually a harsh startup appears with criticism.

- Complaint: "I'm really angry that you didn't sweep the kitchen floor last night. We agreed we would take turns doing it." This is a complaint – it focuses on a specific behavior.
- Criticism: "Why are you so forgetful? I hate having to always sweep the kitchen when it's your turn. You just don't care" is a criticism.

Antidote: Use gentle start up. Approach your partner gently – express your feeling and your need without attacking or criticizing.

2. Defensiveness

Becoming defensive is a way to blame your partner – "I'm right, you're wrong" or "The problem is you. Let me tell you all the ways it's you and not me."

- When discussions or concerns become negative, critical or attacking people naturally feel the need to defend themselves. Although this reaction is natural – research suggests it rarely produces the desired result. Once one party becomes defensive, they start arguing why the other person is wrong, how that doesn't make sense, and have completely tuned out their partner's message or concerns.
- Defensiveness is dangerous because it almost always escalates conflict.
- Criticism, contempt and defensiveness don't occur in order, they feed off one another and can switch from one to the other and back again.

Antidote: Take responsibility. Listen for anything your partner says that you can agree with or that is a good point.

They might say, “You are always late.” You instinct will to be to defend by telling your partner all the times you weren’t late and all the times they were late or disrespectful continuing to escalate the situation. A healthier response might be, “You’re right, today I was late and I’m sorry for that. That wasn’t very considerate of me.” You aren’t fully agreeing with what they are saying but you are taking ownership of your part instead of arguing the details.

3. Invalidation

Any behavior that communicates disgust or looking down upon your partner is invalidation.

- Sarcasm and cynicism are types of contempt. Name-calling, eye-rolling, sneering, mockery and passive aggressive or hostile humor are also types of contempt.
- Invalidation is the most poisonous of the four horsemen because it communicates disgust with your partner. Invalidation leads to more hurt and conflict.
- Invalidation is often fueled by negative thoughts about your partner – you may be having these thoughts if there is unresolved conflict in the relationship.

Antidote: Describe your own feeling and needs. Try to share with your partner how you feel and what you need from them to make things better – this helps to resolve some of those negative thoughts and feelings.

4. Withdrawal

When criticism, invalidation and/or defensiveness are present, eventually one partner will tune out or walk away – this is withdrawal. When someone feels so overwhelmed with negative emotions, they shut down instead of continuing the discussion. The shutdown can be emotional (still on the couch with you, but not present in the conversation) or physical (leaving the room, leaving the house).

Rather than confronting, some are more comfortable disengaging because the idea of conflict or criticism, contempt and defensiveness are overwhelming. The person who is withdrawing acts as though they don’t care about what their partner is saying, if they even hear them at all. When people shut down, they leave their partner hanging in conflict. Typically, the conflict will remain unresolved and the cycle will start again.

Antidote: Practice self-soothing. Practice staying in the moment. Use deep breathing or count to 10. It’s okay to tell your partner you are feeling overwhelmed and take a break or a time-out, just make sure you communicate to them that you are not permanently walking away from the discussion, i.e. “I’m feeling really hurt

and I need to take some time to process and calm down. Would it be okay if we talked about this in an hour (in the morning, tomorrow, etc.)?

Suggestions for taking a time out:

- Agree upon a set amount of time (approximately 20 minutes up to 2 hours from now), where you will come back and discuss the issue.
- Never go beyond 24 hours without revisiting the conversation.
- Use the time to process your own feelings, relax, and self-soothe. Don't ruminate over the fight, what your partner said, or how you will dispute their comments. This will only add fuel to the fire once you come back to the conversation.

Adapted from The Gottman Institute "The Four Horsemen"

Lesson 6: Finances

Lesson Overview

Some of couples' biggest arguments are over money. Learn tips to improve your communication about money, and the way you handle finances in marriage.

Lesson Videos

Click [here](#) for video 1

Discussion Questions

1. Share the following information: What I owe, what I earn, and what I own.
2. How will we handle our finances? Will we combine our money into a joint account?
3. Who will manage the money in our household? What are your concerns (if any) with this decision?
4. How much money would you like to save every month?
5. What are our short-term goals for saving? What are our long-term goals for saving? Ex:
 - a. House
 - b. Car
 - c. Children's college funds
 - d. Retirement
 - e. Travel
 - f. Vacation

Activity

1. Debt Reduction Worksheet

List your debts in order from smallest to largest with the smallest payoff or balance first. Do not be concerned with interest rates or terms unless two debts have similar payoff's, then list the higher interest rate debt first. Paying the little debts off first shows you quick feedback, and you are more likely to stay with the plan. Redo this sheet each time you payoff a debt so you can see how close you are to freedom. Keep the old sheets to wallpaper the bathroom in your new debt-free house.

The "New Payment" is found by adding all the payments on the debts listed above that item to the payment you are working on, so you have compounding payments which will get you out of debt very quickly. (Example: Once Dillard's is paid off, add the \$15 payment to your current Sears payment, for a total \$25 new payment)

Debt Reduction Example:

Debt	Total Payoff	Minimum Payment	New Payment
Dillard's	\$150	\$15	\$15 (payoff first)
Sears	\$250	\$10	\$25
Visa	\$500	\$75	\$100
MasterCard	\$1,500	\$90	\$190
Car	\$4,000	\$210	\$400

My Debt Reduction:

Debt	Total Payoff	Minimum Payoff	New Payment

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2. Setting a Budget

[Here's a budget template using google drive that will help calculate your budget for you!](#) (click "use this template" in the upper right hand corner, then click sheet 1 in the bottom tab section)

Or if you prefer, you may use the table version below!

Expenses per Month	Cost
HOUSING	
Rent/mortgage	
Telephone	
Utilities (gas, electric, water, etc.)	
Maintenance & repair	
Furnishings	
Improvements (landscaping, seasonal decor)	
Household help	
Other (cell phone, internet, cable, etc.)	
Total home-related expenses	
FAMILY	
Food & grocery (health/ beauty, cleaning, etc.)	
Clothing	
Medical & Dental (not covered by insurance)	
Laundry & Dry Cleaning	
Child Care	
Education Expenses (tuition, school lunch, supplies)	
Legal Expenses	
Pet Care (food, supplies, boarding, vet visits)	

Hair Care (cuts, color, etc.)	
Other (alimony, child support, etc.)	
TRANSPORTATION	
Car payment	
Car insurance	
Gas & Oil	
Maintenance & Repair	
Other (lease vehicle, licensing & registration, etc.)	
GIVING	
Charitable (churches, charities, raffles, fundraisers)	
Non-Charitable (Christmas, birthdays, anniversaries)	
LEISURE	
Vacations	
Hobbies (club memberships, racing, crafts, etc.)	
Entertainment (restaurants, fast food, movies, sporting events, parties)	
Other (newspaper, magazines, cigarettes, soft drinks, etc)	
Total non- home related expenses	
TOTAL LIVING EXPENSES	

3. Savings Goal Worksheet

What Type of Goal?	What am I saving for?	When do I need to save it by?	How much do I need saved?	How much will I save weekly?
Short -Term				
Medium - Term				
Long - Term				

Lesson 7: Protect Your Marriage

Lesson Overview

Many people struggle in their marriages due to poor boundaries. These poor boundaries can often lead to emotional or sexual affairs, or other problems within marriage. Learn how to protect your marriage in this lesson.

Lesson Videos

Click [here](#) for video 1

Discussion Questions

1. Do we both know what our boundaries are, when interacting with people of the opposite sex?
2. What are our boundaries and relationship rules for social media?
3. Are there things I do currently that make you uncomfortable, or concerned?
 - a. If so, what can I do differently?
 - b. Why do these things make you uncomfortable/ concerned?
4. Is there anyone specifically you would like me to disconnect with on social media?
5. How can we continue to protect our marriage from outside people or things that may bring us off course?
6. What are we good at doing now that protects our relationship?

Activity

Creating Healthy Boundaries

Shirley Glass developed a concept about boundaries to help promote a healthy relationship and a successful marriage. This concept is called “Walls and Windows.” In order to keep your relationship secure and healthy there should be a window between both partners, and a wall to outsiders who may be threats to the relationship. This window allows you and your partner to be honest and open about the significant and intimate things in your life, whereas a wall between you or your partner and someone who could be a threat to the relationship will protect your relationship from possible inappropriate interactions.

Below is a quiz developed to help you and your partner realize how strong or weak your “walls” and “windows” are. Each partner should complete this quiz separately and then compare answers. Circle the appropriate number using the following scale.

1 = No, disagree completely 2 = Yes, agree somewhat 3 = Yes, agree completely

1 2 3	My partner and I have problems trusting each other.
1 2 3	My partner spends too much time away from our home or me.
1 2 3	My partner often doesn't take my side in anything.
1 2 3	My partner confides in others about intimate things in our relationship.
1 2 3	My partner does not include me in any of his or her daily life.
1 2 3	I feel uncomfortable about the way my partner communicates with people of the opposite sex.
1 2 3	My partner and I struggle to have intimate or deep conversations.
1 2 3	My partner doesn't tell me about the friendships or relationships he or she makes at work or outside our home or relationship.
1 2 3	I don't feel that I can always be honest with my partner.

Total your score and scroll down to the next page to learn more about your “walls and windows”

Scoring

Total score : _____ out of 27

If your score was between 9 - 12:

Your relationship is in a good place, the window between you and your partner is clear and you are able to communicate about significant parts of your life in an open way. This does not mean that it will always be this way though, your boundaries, or “walls” and “windows” need to have maintenance done every once in a while and making sure to have open discussions about them with your partner is a great way to ensure everyone is comfortable.

If your score was between 13 - 20:

If you scored between 13 and 20, it seems there may be some blurred lines on what the boundaries are between you and your partner as well as where the “walls” and “windows” are. You may be able to have some open discussion with your partner, however it seems that there are some situations in which there is some questioning about trust or behaviors. Now is a great time to address those and talk to your partner about when and why you may feel uncomfortable. Look back through the quiz and specifically target the questions in which you answered 2, and especially 3.

If your score was between 21 - 27:

If you scored between 21 - 27, there may be some trust and boundary issues that you and your partner are struggling through. This does not mean your relationship is doomed! It just means that right now your relationship is more vulnerable to outside threats. It is important to solidify your “walls” and “windows” now so that your marriage can start off on the best foot. To do so, go back through the quiz and pay special attention to the questions that you answered 2, and especially the ones that you answered 3 (Yes, agree completely). Have a conversation with your partner to see how you can both work to improve these boundaries and better protect your marriage!

Lesson 8: Moving from Good to Great

Lesson Overview

Marriage is hard work, but it's worth it! Watch these videos for a few important points as we conclude the premarital course.

Lesson Videos

Click [here](#) for video 1

Click [here](#) for video 2

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think was the biggest take-away from this course in regards to your relationship?
2. How are you and your partner planning to continue to keep your relationship a priority when life gets busy?
3. What is the biggest strength in your relationship?
4. What is the biggest weakness?
5. What are three things you appreciate about your partner?
 - a. How can you keep these in mind while having an argument?
 - b. How can you remind your partner of these when they are feeling down?
6. What are you most looking forward to in your future marriage with your partner?

Activity

Congratulations!

You have completed Dr. Tabitha's premarital workbook! In order to receive the certificate please follow the steps below:

1. Complete the quiz in Lesson 8.
2. Once you have finished the quiz, please visit the "My Courses" page
3. Next, click on "Completed Courses" to view and print your certificate.
4. Take this certificate with you to the Clerk of Courts when you register for your marriage license.
5. Live happily ever after.