

Marriage List Bootcamp:

Student Workbook

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Message from Marriage List

We help couples meet each others' needs

Marriage List is a way to encourage the healing of relationships which may be hurting.

Wouldn't it be helpful if there was a simple tool to help couples understand what items are of greatest importance to each other? Of all the competing priorities, which is the most important one for your spouse to have met? While understanding is not a guarantee that they will be able to meet those most important needs, it is definitely the first step. Marriage List's Assessment makes this happen. By assessing an individual's most important needs, and through careful, patient, and gentle inquiry, even couples where an individual struggles to identify exactly what is bothering them will be able to identify and resolve the greatest gaps.

For example: Let's assume taking out the trash is a "10" for the wife but the husband is performing at a "3". Assuming there is no greater gap than this, it would place this task at the top of the list. This enables each spouse to see quickly and clearly which items are of greatest importance to the other.

Often, in relationships, we make assumptions that the same needs which are most important to us are the most important to the other person. Rarely is this the case. This often results in our spending time and effort reaching out to a spouse in a way that is ineffective. Understanding the needs of a spouse allows their partner to focus their time and energy in a successful manner, bringing satisfaction and joy to them both.

In life there are many joys and challenges. One of the highest goals we as human beings aspire to is to love and be loved. Marriage List is here to help couples succeed in their journey. The positive effects of a happy marriage are generational and worth every effort. Thank you for letting us be a part of your journey.

Dr. Craig Cobia

Session 1

Introduction

Objectives

*Help identify the greatest gap using assessment.
Establish individual and couple goals.*

 *Paid Assessment.pdf*

Session 2

Communication

1. What did communication look like in your family growing up?
2. In what way do you and your spouse communicate well with each other?
3. What makes it difficult for you to communicate openly with your spouse?

- What are some distractions that can make it hard to listen well in a marriage?
- How can we address these distractions?

Let's put some of these skills into practice. In this activity one partner will practice using active listening skills, and the other will practice using the open communication skills. Here are some questions you can ask each other. Turn off your cameras and mics. One person will ask your spouse any of the questions on the list, and they will respond back honestly. Try to avoid judgement, and instead focus on just improving your communication skills. You will have 3 minutes then I will let you know when to switch roles.

- Q1: How has your week been?
- Q2: When are you happiest?
- Q3: How do you think you've changed since we got married?
- Q4: What is one thing that has been going well in our marriage?
- Q5: What can I do better to support you?

Action items:

1. Spend 10 minutes everyday talking one on one about something not related to coordinating plans (i.e. budgeting, driving kids places, planning meals etc.)
 2. Ask a follow up question to something your spouse says at least once a day.
 3. Share how you are feeling each day with your spouse.
 4. Go on a date where you don't look at your phones the entire time.
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Session 3

Trust and Commitment

Take a few minutes to reflect on how you feel about trust and commitment.

- How was trust and commitment discussed and shown in your family growing up?
 - Do you feel comfortable discussing barriers to trust and commitment with your spouse?
 - What is your greatest struggle when it comes to discussing the trust and commitment levels in your marriage?
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- Talk with your spouse. What were their thoughts and feelings? Share yours as well. Discuss how you feel those feelings affect your trust and commitment in marriage.

Work with your spouse to discuss long term goals to strive toward together.

Why is it important for couples to have a united goal and unified world views, and be able to work towards those goals and views in a unified yet individual manner?
How can couples work individually toward a unified outcome?

Action Items:

1. Work on compiling a list of your and your spouse's long term goals, and aligning these goals to create a unified path forward. .
2. Discuss the different boundaries you have set with your spouse as well as the ones you hold with people outside of your marriage, make sure they are agreeable for both yourself and your spouse.
3. Play a game of Charades
4. Volunteering: Look at <https://www.justserve.org/> for local service opportunities to fill together.

Session 4

Emotional Connection and Friendship

Questions to Consider:

- Does this statistic surprise you?
- Do you feel this is true of your marriage?
- What could you change?

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- Take a few minutes to reflect on how you feel about emotional connection and friendship.
 - How were emotions handled and friendship shown in your family growing up?
 - Do you feel comfortable discussing your friendship and the various emotions you have with your spouse?
 - What is your greatest struggle when it comes to discussing your emotions?
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- Talk with your spouse.
 - What were their thoughts and feelings? Share yours as well.
 - Discuss how you feel those feelings affect your intimacy and romance in marriage.
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Consider these following questions

- How was your day?
- What is something that always cheers you up?
- What is your definition of success?
- If money wasn't a factor what would your dream job be?
- What advice would you give your 18-year-old self?
- What did you want to be when you grew up?

- What is something you wish more people knew about you?
- When are you happiest?
- What is one thing you are grateful your parents taught you?
- What is one lesson you want your kids to learn?
- How did your family handle conflict?
- What's an opinion you've had that has changed over time?
- What is something you're looking forward to this month?
- How have you been feeling emotionally lately?
- What's been on your mind?
- What is one thing that went well in our marriage this week?
- What is a hobby you would like to pick up?
- What is something that made you laugh recently?
- What is one of your favorite childhood memories?
- What kind of music have you been listening to lately?
- What is one of your favorite memories of us?
- What can I do better to support you?
- How has work been going?
- What is a recent accomplishment you are proud of?
- What would an ideal family vacation look like to you?

List 10 things you are grateful for about your spouse.

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

Action Items:

1. Coordinate at least one meal each day to eat with each other and talk until the next session.
2. Play a board or card game together.
3. Find a meditation activity and do it together.
4. With your spouse, select a location in your city that you have never been to before and visit it.

Session 5

Conflict Management

Objectives

My spouse is respectful during conflict.

My spouse avoids using criticism.

My spouse actively listens when I bring up conflict.

Step 1: Personal Evaluation

- Take a few minutes to reflect on how you feel about conflict.
 - Do you hate conflict and avoid it at all costs, or do you find it helpful?
 - What do you think might be some benefits of conflict?
 - When conflict arises in your marriage, do you tend to become passive aggressive?

Step 2: Evaluation with your spouse

- Talk with your spouse. What were their thoughts and feelings? Share yours as well. Discuss how you feel those feelings affect your ability to manage conflict as a couple.

“I” statements are statements that communicate your thoughts and feelings to your spouse without pointing blame through “you” statements. ‘

Compare the following statements. How do each make you feel? How would you react differently to the first statement rather than the second one?

- “I feel sad when I am home alone.” versus “You are never home!”
- “I feel overwhelmed when I have to pick the kids up and make dinner.” versus “You never help out with the kids or at home!”
- “I think the cat needs more food.” versus “You are not feeding the cat enough.”

Using “I” statements, however, is just the beginning. There are three parts to an “I” statement. First, start out by saying how you feel or what you think/believe, as described above. Second, connect the feeling to an event or issue. Third, tell your spouse what you would like to change.

Let’s look at those statements again.

“1. I feel sad 2. when I am home alone. 3. Can we do something fun together when you are home from work?”

“1. I feel overwhelmed 2. when I have to pick the kids up and make dinner. 3. Would you be willing to make dinner when it's my turn to pick up the kids?”

“1. I think the cat needs more food 2. When I come home from work in the evenings she seems hungry. 3. Can you feed her in the afternoon while I’m gone at work?”

It’s important to not let “I” statements turn into “You statements.” Don’t let yourself be caught saying “I feel angry when YOU don’t let me watch the show I want!”

1. **List out several statements, “I” statements or “You” statements.** For each statement made, draft the alternate statement as well so that each statement has an “I” form and a “You” form.
2. **Read these statements silently** and see how they feel in your mind. Notice any differences?
3. **Say the corresponding ‘I’ statement.** Did that feel any different?

Why is it important to say your opinions as opinions, and not try to line them up as facts?
What do you think about “I” statements? Do you think this can be helpful for your marriage?
How is the delivery of our communication important for opening up discussions in disagreements?

1. How can feeling understood by your spouse decrease defensiveness?
2. How do you think the Speaker-Listener technique could help in conflicts? Do you see any obstacles that might prevent you from using this technique?
3. Are there other ways respect can be maintained while discussing conflicts in your marriage?

Action Items:

1. Have a 15 minute conversation with your spouse to practice active listening. Find an object that will represent “the floor” and make sure that the person with the floor is the speaker and the other partner is the listener.
2. During the week, when you notice a conflict with your spouse. Take a moment to pause and recognize that there is conflict going on and remember that conflict is a good thing that will help you improve your relationship. Remind yourself that the conflict is against the problem, not against your spouse.
3. If, during a conflict, you notice tempers beginning to glare, use an “I” Statement

to gently request a few minutes to cool off. Decide on a specific time when you will resume your conflict.

4. Make a list of situations or feelings that make it difficult for you to stay calm during. (i.e. when you are hungry, tired, lonely; when you are making dinner, when the house is a mess, etc.)

Session 6

Financial Management

Objectives

This week we will focus on working through financial conflict.

Step 1: Personal Evaluation

Take a few minutes to reflect on how you feel about money.

- How was money managed in your family growing up?
- Do you feel money is a blessing or a problem?
- What is your greatest struggle when it comes to managing your finances?

Step 2: Evaluation with your spouse

- Talk with your spouse.
- What were their thoughts and feelings? Share yours as well.
- Discuss how you feel those feelings affect your ability to manage finances as a couple.

Consider sharing a personal experience you have had that would be uplifting and helpful to the group. In a group setting your confidential information should not be shared. Only share what you are comfortable sharing.

How does working together on finances with your spouse draw you closer together as a couple?

What are some budget challenges that you might encounter when working with your spouse on a unified plan?

- 1) Plan and use the envelope system for your spending this week.
From the net amount of income you have coming into your home this week, divide it into amounts for your various spending categories.
At the end of the week, take your income out in cash. (If you decide to do this only for specific “black hole” categories you can leave your rent/mortgage payment portion, etc. in your bank account.)
Label an envelope with each category and place the allotted cash in the envelope..
For the next week, only spend out of each category’s envelope and when the money's gone, it is gone so take care how you spend it.
Bonus: If there is money left over at the end of the week, it can go into savings or your fun fund!
- 2) Plan your meals for the following week. This can help you control your grocery and eating out/entertainment categories.

[illegible]

Action Items:

- Start a budget together, or add to or reevaluate your budget, as needed.
- Carry out the plan you made for either meal planning or the envelope system.
Choose 1 or 2 of the following to work on this week:
- Discuss with your spouse in more detail what dreams and goals they have for future spending.
- Make plans for a future fun moment you can save for together.
- Talk about a time in your past life that influenced your attitude about money. Discuss how it affects you today and whether you want to make a change or include those influences going forward in your financial life together.

Additional Study:

Merging finances:

<https://academic.oup.com/jcr/article-abstract/50/4/704/7077142?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

Session 7

Intimacy and Romance

Take a few minutes to reflect on how you feel about intimacy.

- How was intimacy and romance discussed and shown in your family growing up?
 - Do you feel comfortable discussing deep personal topics with your spouse?
 - What is your greatest struggle when it comes to discussing and showing intimacy?
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1. Select a way to increase intimacy that speaks your spouse's primary love language to complete for your spouse each day until the next session.
2. Plan and Confirm the date of your next date night.
3. Have an open conversation about physical intimacy with your spouse, discussing the good and the bad to the current intimate settings in your marriage.
4. Read a book on intimacy in marriage together. *Here are a few suggestions:*
 - a. *And They Were Not Ashamed: Strengthening Marriage Through Sexual Fulfillment* by Laura Brotherson
 - b. *Between Husband and Wife* by Douglas Brinkley and Stephen Lamb
 - c. *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* by John Gottman

Session 8

Conclusion

Objectives

Create actionable goals on how to strengthen your marriage.

Step 1: Personal Evaluation

Up to this point now you have learned about how to strengthen your marriage in terms of communication, financial management, emotional connection, intimacy, trust, and in managing conflict. As we come to a close we want to give you an opportunity to reflect on all that you have learned, and create actionable goals on what you can do to be a better spouse. Take about 3 minutes now to reflect on the following questions and write down any thoughts that come to your mind.

1. What lesson do you feel benefitted your marriage most? Why?
2. What have you done to become a better spouse since starting the Marriage List bootcamp?

Step 2: Evaluation with your spouse

Now that you've had some time to reflect, you will have some time to talk with your spouse. Take 5 minutes now to turn off your cameras and mics and discuss with your spouse what thoughts and feelings came to your mind during that personal reflection time.

How can you combine aspects from multiple lessons to strengthen your marriage?

Action items:

- Invite a friend to attend a bootcamp
- Share your experience on our website about how this bootcamp has benefited you
- Retake the assessment in 6 months