



FOR BETTER *Communication* **IN MARRIAGE**

STEP 2 **YOUR COMMUNICATION** **PLAN**

Prepared on 2/22/22 for:
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hooray!

YOU COMPLETED THE FINAL STEP.

Congratulations on completing For Better: Communication In Marriage! If you've made it this far, we know for a fact that you've made some amazing progress when it comes to communication in your marriage. That being said, we hope this is just the beginning of the transformation to come! This course is meant to be a great launching point for the two of you to continue to strengthen yourselves, each other, and your marriage - especially in the area of communication.

This download contains a simple overview of each section of the course you just completed, as well as a "For Better" section that directs you in next steps you can take. We have laid it out to be an easy tool to use when you want to look back on something in the course. The very last section also has Your Marriage Communication Plan, which includes your Do's and Don'ts of Communication and your Stop, Start, Continue that you defined in the course. We highly suggest printing at least that page off and hanging it somewhere you can see it as a reminder to you both!

A WORD FROM

First Things First

As a team, we hope that this won't be the last time you come to First Things First. Our passion is to walk alongside couples like you and give a supporting hand in any way we can. Don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions! Our website is full of great resources (free ones, too!) designed to help strengthen your marriage. We believe that a strong and healthy marriage is possible, and that you're one huge step closer to it!



OVERVIEW OF SECTION ONE: TEMPERAMENTS

MAIN IDEA: Temperaments are biologically based. They are your natural actions and are only a small part of your personality. The differences between temperaments in a marriage are often the source of communication breakdowns. Every temperament has strengths. When you start to understand and rely on each other's strengths, your marriage and communication will get stronger, too.

SOLVING PROBLEMS	REFLECTIVE <i>Patently weighs pros and cons "Let's give it some time."</i>	TAKING CHARGE <i>Makes quick decisions "Let's do it right now."</i>
PROCESSING INFORMATION	REALISTIC <i>Leans into logic and reason "Show me the evidence."</i>	OPTIMISTIC <i>Values instincts and intuition "My gut feeling says yes."</i>
HANDLING CHANGE	ACCEPTING <i>Likes variety and adventures "Let's try something new."</i>	RESISTANT <i>Likes predictability and routine "Let's keep things as is."</i>
TAKING RISKS	PIONEERING <i>Views rules as obstacles "Rules are made to be broken."</i>	STRUCTURED <i>Views rules as protection "Let's follow the rules."</i>

Our differences in these areas can push us apart over time when we lose sight of the value of those differences. You have a choice when you encounter your differences. You can judge each other, or you can seek to understand your differences. When you judge, you can grow the distance between you, but when you seek to understand, you will grow closer together.

Today is the day to do something differently in your marriage. ***If you want something to change, you have to change something.***

Temperaments, **FOR BETTER**

Take time to look over your own and your spouse's temperament assessment results. Talk about what you agree with, what you might not agree with, and what your spouse sees in your results.

This assessment is designed to help give you a common language you can use around your motivations, your actions, and your emotions. Be curious about your spouse and their temperaments. Try to understand their strengths and the value they can bring to your relationship.



OVERVIEW OF SECTION TWO: SKILLS

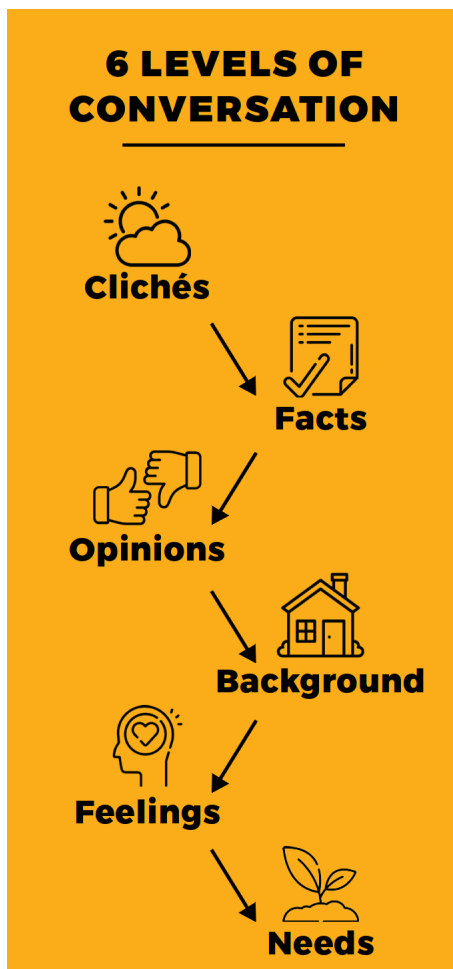
MAIN IDEA: Communication is a skill. Therefore, it is learnable, it can be practiced, and it can improve. Every couple faces communication challenges. Maybe you do some things that aren't healthy, and you know your spouse does things that aren't healthy. But we want you to take each of these as a "couple problem." Both of you own the problem, and both of you own the solution.

THE TOP FIVE CHALLENGES COUPLES FACE:

1. KEEPING COMMUNICATION OPEN Creating a space of trust is key! You need to be on the same page: that you both have the best intentions for each other and that you're on the same team. You both know that you have each other's backs.

2. FEELING HEARD If you or your partner is Hungry, on Edge, Angry, or Tired, your conversation is going to get HEATED pretty quickly - it probably isn't going to be a good time for certain conversations, especially if it's about why those feelings are happening. Assess the timing, then listen to understand, not to respond.

3. OVERCOMING MISUNDERSTANDINGS Good communication happens when what you hear is what the speaker meant to say. But every normal marriage has moments when miscommunications happen.



4. HAVING DEEP CONVERSATIONS When a lack of depth is an issue, it's usually rooted in intimacy, not in communication. But by practicing great communication through deep conversations, you can boost your intimacy, too!

5. CREATING TIME TO TALK The number one obstacle to creating time to talk is having an overly-full schedule. Priorities come into play here, but oftentimes, there isn't anything you can drop off the schedule. So then what? That's when intention comes into play.

No matter which challenge you experience most (or if you feel all five equally!), we know you have what it takes to overcome them. If at any point you and your spouse feel stuck, don't hesitate to contact us. We can help you assess the level of help you may need to overcome the challenges you're facing in your marriage.

Skills, FOR BETTER

- *To build your space of trust, try everything you can to communicate to your spouse that you have their back and are on the same team - no matter what.*
- *When you begin a conversation, first, check to see if it's the right time for your spouse. Then see if either of you is Hungry, on Edge, Angry, or Tired (HEAT). Finally, listen with the intent to understand, not to respond.*
- *Seek clarity at every stop of the conversation. Restate what your spouse is saying. Ask questions along the way. This will help to prevent miscommunications from happening in the first place.*
- *Don't spend all your time in the first three levels of conversation! When having quality time with your spouse, try and take every conversation to the 4th, 5th, and 6th level.*
- *Talk together to establish a time you both are able to have good conversations. Whether that's part of your daily routine or prioritizing a date night all about communication, make it happen at least once in the next two weeks.*



OVERVIEW OF SECTION THREE: CONFLICT

MAIN IDEA: This isn't a conflict course, but we can't dive deep into communication without touching on conflict. The two often go hand in hand, and an issue with one often leads to an issue in another. That's why we want to give a brief overview of conflict and offer a few simple skills to resolve common conflicts in marriage.

LET'S TALK ABOUT TENSION...

Ultimately, it's not me vs. you - it's us vs. the issue. Do you want to come out stronger on the other end? Or for your marriage to come out stronger?

Often, this is what tends to happen in tense situations...



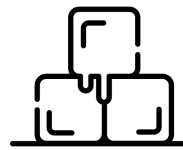
FIGHT

You're ready to defend



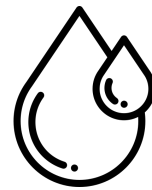
FLIGHT

You're ready to run away



FREEZE

You feel mentally paralyzed



FAWN

You give in and blame yourself automatically

A lot of people feel powerless to these reactions, but with some work, reflection, and habit-building, you do have the power to become aware of these reactions and respond to them. The awareness is what will get you started in the right direction. When you can name it, you can tame it.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Below is one way to resolve conflict, especially when conflict revolves around communication in marriage. The STOP framework is intended to give you a frame of mind to be able to stop conflict before it starts. When you acknowledge tension, remember this:

STOP what you're doing. Step back from the tension for a minute.

TAKE a few deep breaths.

OBSERVE what's going on in your experience: your thoughts, feelings, emotions, and physical reactions..

PROCEED with more awareness, a calmer state of mind, and a purpose to engage with the problem rather than attack your spouse.



Conflict, **FOR BETTER**

Expressing your feelings is the goal, but if done in an unhealthy manner, you can trigger yourself back into tension, and you've lost your mindful STOP. To avoid this, another helpful framework:

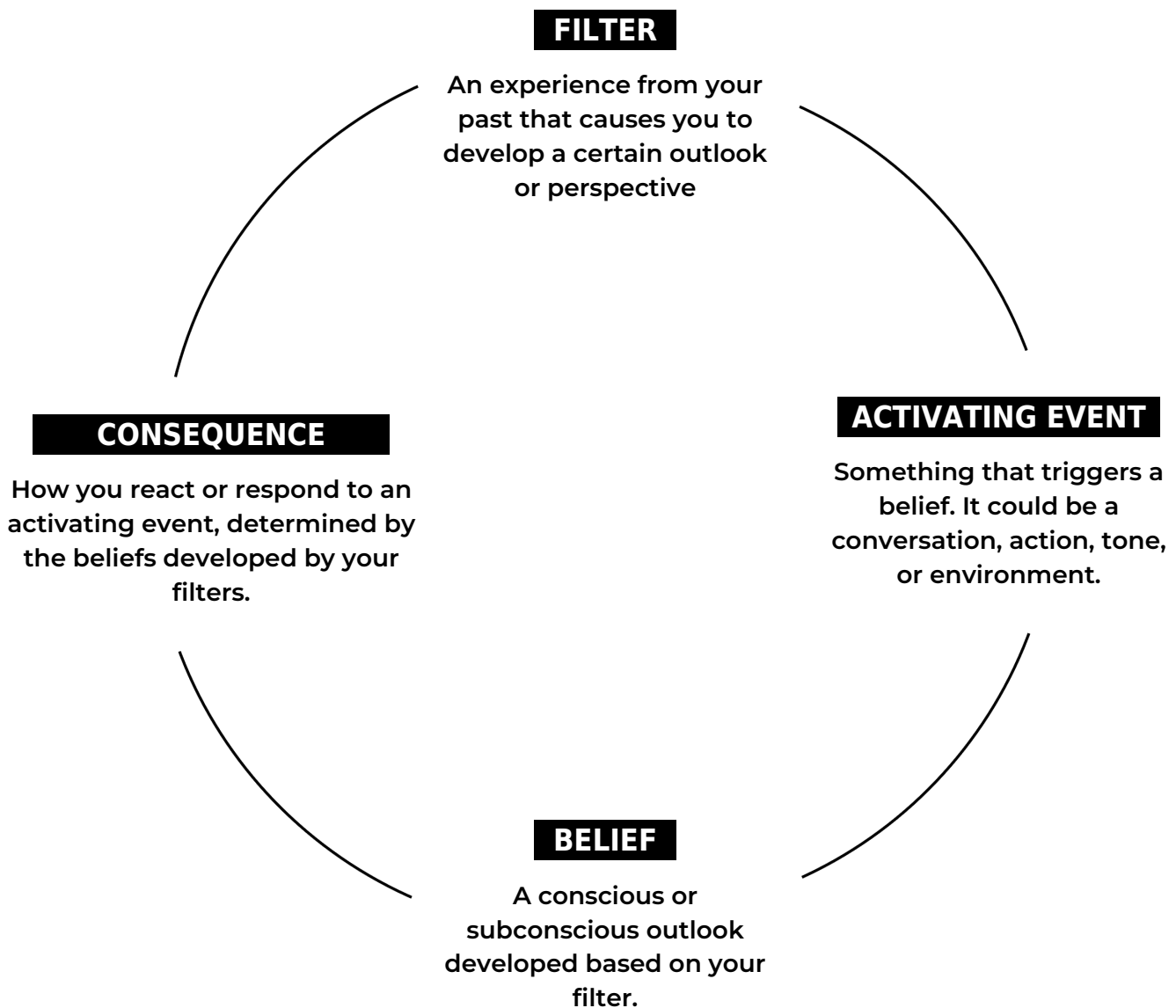
"I feel (emotion) when you (cause/action) in (situation) , and I would like (change) ."



OVERVIEW OF SECTION FOUR: FILTERS

MAIN IDEA: Filters are experiences, episodes, and memories from your past - whether distant or recent - that influence how you act and react in certain situations in the present. Filters themselves aren't good or bad. They just are. We've all had good and bad experiences that have shaped how we think about certain things.

HOW FILTERS WORK:



THERE ARE THREE KEYS FOR RECOGNIZING AND SEEING PAST YOUR OWN FILTERS:

- 1 Acknowledging your activating event
- 2 Recognizing any irrational beliefs surrounding that activating event
- 3 Respecting your filter, but choosing to seek the true reality

Filters, **FOR BETTER**

Remember: you can't change your own or your spouse's filters. But you can seek to understand each other's filters and graciously help each other seek the true reality.

This process takes time and intention. The more you practice it together, the easier it will become!

Don't hesitate to reach out for professional help if you encounter a filter or belief that you cannot process on your own.

here's your

MARRIAGE COMMUNICATION PLAN

And now, the moment you've been waiting for! Below are three different areas of growth for your specific marriage. You'll see your Strengths Charts, your Dos and Don'ts for Communication In Marriage, and your Stop, Start, Continue. With everything you've learned in this course and these three tools in your pocket, you can start to build better communication habits for your marriage!

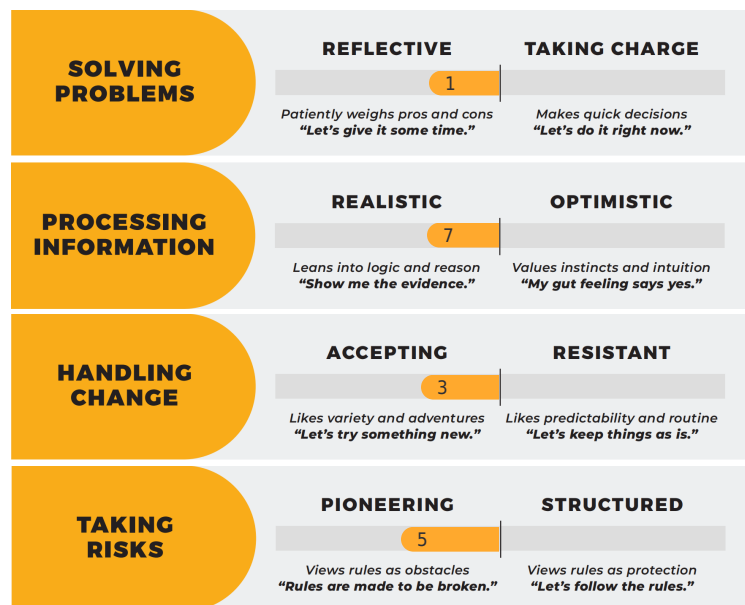
We highly recommend printing these pages out and putting them somewhere you both can see them frequently.

Here are both of your strength charts and where you fall on each continuum. Remember, each of you brings strengths in each area. No strength is better than the other. Instead of judging each other because of your differences, choose to value each other's strengths instead.

YOUR STRENGTH CHARTS

TEST 2'S TEMPERAMENT

TEST 2'S TEMPERAMENT





DO'S AND DON'TS FOR COMMUNICATION:

Below are the statements you created that encompass your dos and don'ts of communication for your marriage. This list should never be used as a weapon against each other, but instead, should be a tool to keep yourselves accountable for pursuing healthy, strong communication in your marriage.

DO'S:

- 1 Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.
- 2 Praesent ac aliquam ipsum, non pulvinar turpis.
- 3 Proin sit amet ultricies orci.

DON'TS:

- 1 Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.
- 2 Praesent ac aliquam ipsum, non pulvinar turpis.
- 3 Proin sit amet ultricies orci.



STOP, START, CONTINUE

Finally, below is your list of what you would like to stop, what you would like to start, and what you would like to continue. Again, this should never be used as a weapon against each other or as a breeding ground for resentment. But using the skills you learned in this course, you can choose to embrace this plan and allow it to reshape communication in your marriage.

STOP	START	CONTINUE
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Your marriage, **FOR BETTER**

Whew! You've made it through a whole lot of talk about talking. (But by now, you know it's so much more than that!) We hope you feel accomplished and stronger than ever! Remember that we are here for you. If you have any questions as you move forward, don't hesitate to reach out.

Don't forget, every marriage has seasons. No matter what your marriage looks like right now or what season you're in, you can have hope for the future. By completing this course, you have taken one huge step toward the relationship you are working toward.

***We hope that your communication has grown,
For Better.***

Cheering you on always,

The First Things First Team