

A free public seminar



Topics include:

Happiness for Two
Coping with Change
When Ideals Don't Match
The Good, The Bad and ...
When Faults are Revealed
A Construction Kit for Development
Building Blocks for Better & Beautiful
Forever Possibilities
Question and Answer Session

Duration: 90 Minutes

*Format: Multimedia Seminar
and dramatic reading*

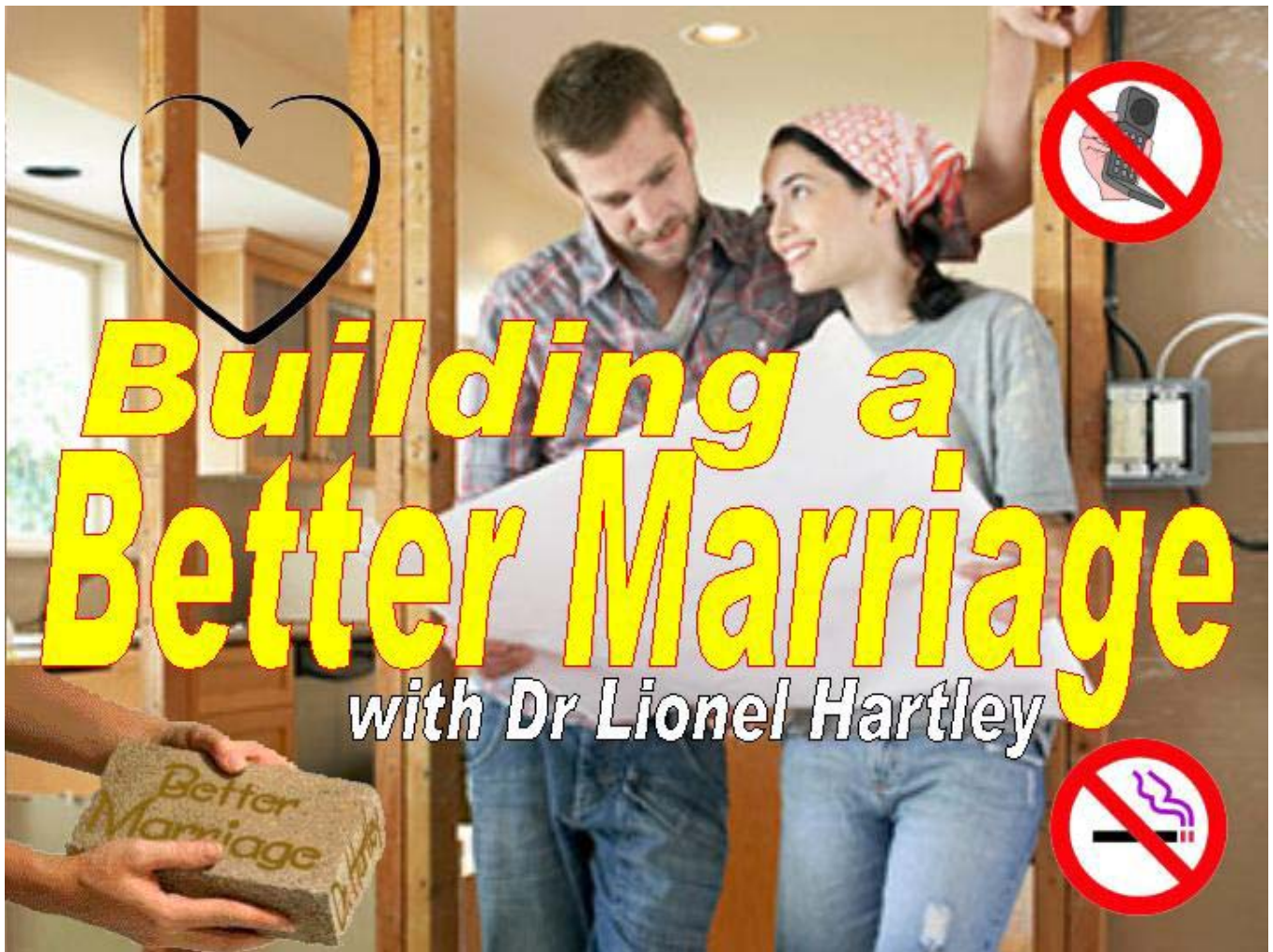
*Resources: Free Handouts and
Homework Activities*

*A marriage
enrichment program
for those who are
married and for
those contemplating
marriage*

Full seminar transcript with
PowerPoint® slides and handouts

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Lionel Hartley, PhD



Building a Better Marriage

A seminar by Lionel Hartley
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Slide 1: Focus slide

Slide 2: Title Slide





Building a Better Marriage Happiness for Two



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3

Slide 3: Happiness for Two (Paderewski)

Just before her silver wedding anniversary, a well-known woman found herself seated next to Paderewski at a dinner party. She told the world-famous pianist that she had often heard him play when she was a student at Northampton Academy of Music.


“Do you ever go back to visit your old school?” he asked.

“Oh, yes,” she replied. “I often go back to the old chapel and find my seat. I like to sit in my old place and think about how much happier I am now than I ever thought I could be when I was a student.”

This aroused Paderewski’s interest. He stopped eating in surprise, and asked, “You don’t mean to say that you’re happier today than you



thought you'd be when you dreamed about the future as an eighteen-year-old?"

"Yes, that's exactly what I mean," she smiled. Paderewski made a little bow to her and said, "Madame, I would very much like to meet your husband!"




Building a Better Marriage

Who is your speaker for today?



Lionel Hartley, author, radio broadcaster, public speaker and retired sociologist. He was a Lifestyle Educator and Family-life Counsellor for three decades. He is a grandparent, married to Rosemary with three grown children.




We welcome your participation in today's seminar.
Time will be allowed at the end for your questions.

Lionel D C Hartley, DipAdmin(NZIM), HonDip (DramArt), DipTheol (SDB), RGN (Psy, PsyPaed, Admin, Nutn), Dip Bus Law, Dip Econ, Dip Accy, BA (Lit), MA, PhD [etc.]

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Slide 4: Who is your speaker for today?

What a tribute to a spouse! "Marriage is all I ever hoped it would be — and much, much more."

Wouldn't you love for your husband or wife to be able to say that after 25 years of being married to you?

I remember someone saying to me just shortly after our 35th

wedding anniversary, that 35 years with one woman is a long time. I replied by saying that without her, those 35 wonderful years would have been a lot longer.

It's been said that the person who has a happy marriage is fortunate even if he is unlucky in every other aspect of life. And yes, the reverse is true as well. The person who is unhappily married ought to be pitied even if he prospers in many other ways.

Some bachelors like to give the impression that they feel sorry for married men. They joke about their peers who get "caught in the trap" that they themselves are smart enough to avoid. They throw bachelor parties for a soon-to-be-married friend, where they give him sympathy cards and needle him with 'last-night-of-freedom' jokes.

But it's pretty obvious these people don't really know what they're talking about. In the first place, they haven't experienced marriage for themselves. 'The bachelor may think he can put himself in the married man's place, but he really can't. Only a person who is or has been married can understand what it's like.

Not long ago I read an article with the title, "The Life That Kills Bachelors." It was based on information from insurance company statistics involving six million people. It highlighted the fact that the married man is far better off than his unmarried counterpart.

For one thing, he lives longer. Some people joke about this and say that life just seems longer for married men! But it is an undeniable fact that a married man really does have a longer life span than his single counterpart. The latter is more inclined to live dangerously and to disregard his health than the married man. And when he's sick he's not as well cared for as the man who has a wife.

Another study, by Columbia University psychology professor

Jonathan I. Freedman, shows that the greatest happiness for women, even in this liberated age, is still to be found in a marriage based on love. He and other professionals in the field have come to the same conclusion: married people of both sexes, whatever their age, are happier than the unmarried.



Slide 5: (unfinished house)

For me, the picture says it all. This is a visual metaphor for the difference between a Wedding and a Marriage. In the photo, first you see the front of the house tastefully done — exterior details completed and landscaped.

Then behind the finished façade, you view the remainder of the house, still under construction.

The beautiful front represents the Wedding. The rest being built signifies the Marriage.

I have often thought; what would happen if a couple spent as much time, money, and energy planning for and investing in their Marriage, as they do on their Wedding?

In her book *The Starter Marriage and the Future of Matrimony*, Pamela Paul, an editor at American Demographics, says: “Weddings have morphed into massive extravaganzas, costing from \$20,000 on up. . . Couples devote 1½ years to planning the wedding. They often hire a wedding planner. . . A recent issue of Bride’s magazine was the largest consumer magazine ever. It weighed in at 2.3 kilos (4.9 pounds).”



Building a Better Marriage
The Good, The Bad & ...

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6

Slide 6: The Good, The Bad and ...

But is marriage in itself an absolute guarantee to happiness and satisfaction? Millions of men and women answer that question every year with a resounding “No!” They often follow that up with an equally resounding “Good-bye.”

A minister with long experience in marriage counselling used to think the worst thing that could happen to a girl was to be an “old maid.” But after years of talking with disillusioned, heartbroken, love-hungry wives, he has since changed his mind.

Many have expressed the thought that the nearest most of us will come to heaven on this earth is to experience true love in a good marriage. And the closest one can get to hell is to discover he or she is tied to a person whose ideals and interests are diametrically opposed to one’s own and whose habits irritate and plague every day.

Some young women, fed up with their loneliness and hard work, think marriage would mean freedom from their mundane toil. What a surprise awaits them! Marriage is no vacation. Nor does it bring freedom from work. The truth of the matter is that successful marriages involve a lot of hard work.

In answer to a question on how to make a good marriage great, a counsellor replied, “Work hard at it like a slave!” But this kind of work can be the happiest in the world if it is done in cooperation with the right person.

Let’s face the facts, though. Marriage can be less than heavenly. Should you let that news scare you off? Of course not. But if you’re currently considering marriage, be forewarned: Good marriages involve hard work. If you’re already married, and it’s not all you thought it would be, the same is true for you. Bad marriages can be turned into good ones. The key, again, is work. What makes a happy

marriage? Let's find out together.

Building a Better Marriage
More Than Good Looks!

What does a wise person look for?

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Slide 7: It Takes More Than Good Looks! (Interviewer)

A journalist asked an attractive young woman whether she would choose to be wise or pretty if she could have only one of these qualities. Her response was immediate. “Pretty!”

“I thought so!” he exclaimed. “Is it because of men?”

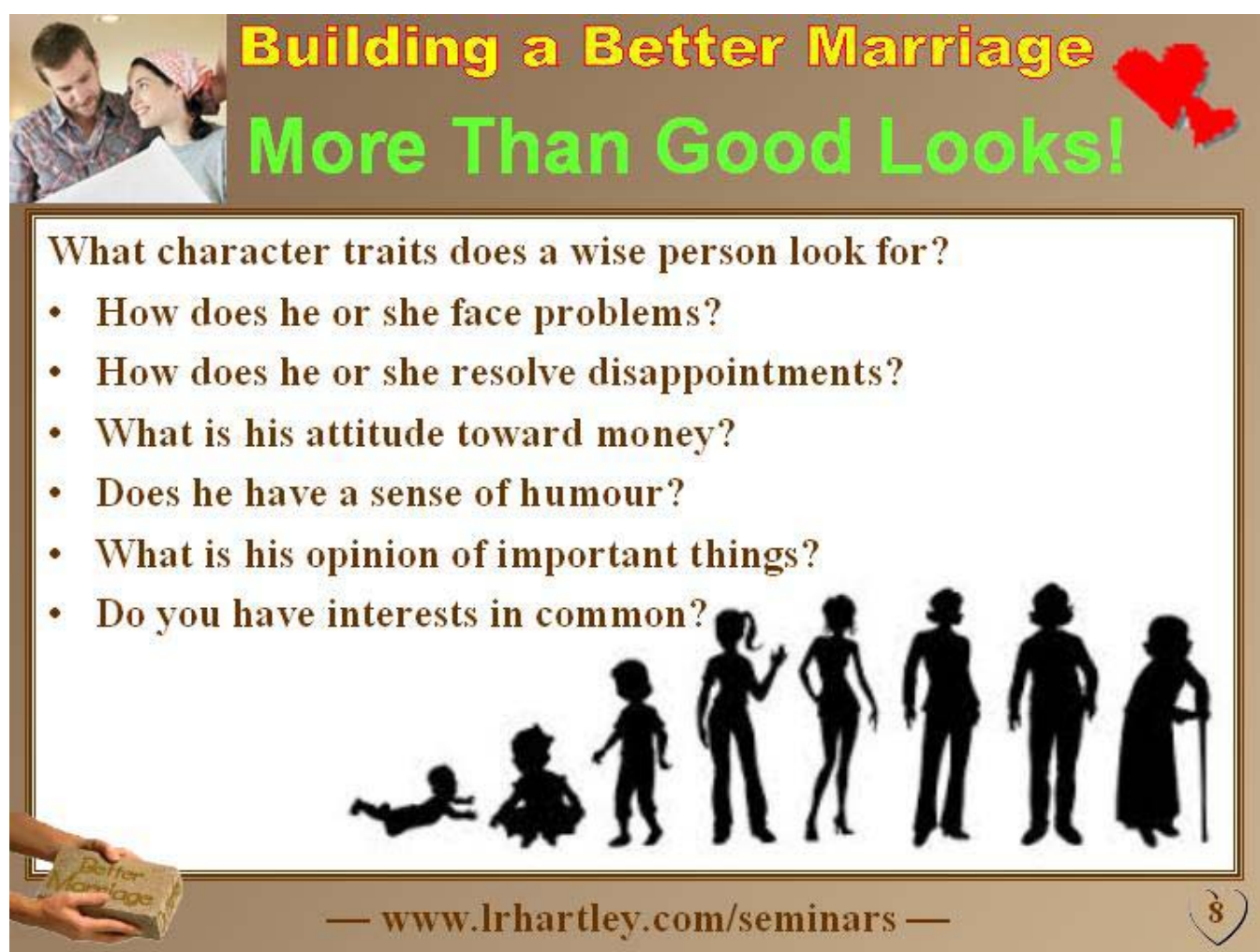
“You guessed it,” she laughed. “It’s obvious that men can see a lot more clearly than they can think!”

She probably wasn’t too far off base, was she? Physical attraction does play a major role in a marriage. We all want our “better half” to be better looking than the competition. And there’s really nothing

wrong with choosing a mate you're going to enjoy looking at for the next fifty years or so. But just how valuable is the asset of looks?

Sir Walter Raleigh gave a wise answer to this question. In advising his son, who was planning to marry a girl solely for her beauty, Raleigh said, "You tie yourself for life to a person because of something which not only won't last but may please you only for a short time, and which you may not even value once you have it. "

What things are important in a life partner?



Building a Better Marriage
More Than Good Looks!

What character traits does a wise person look for?

- How does he or she face problems?
- How does he or she resolve disappointments?
- What is his attitude toward money?
- Does he have a sense of humour?
- What is his opinion of important things?
- Do you have interests in common?

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8

Slide 8: It Takes More Than Good Looks!

What does the wise person look for?

Character traits expressed in the face, the voice, the habits.

How does he or she **face problems** and **resolve disappointments**?

What is his **attitude toward money**?

Does he have a **sense of humour** that can even laugh at self once in a while?

What is his **opinion of the things you consider important** in life?

Do you have **interests in common**?

These and similar matters that reflect personality, character, and values are far more important than mere physical beauty, which will fade, and ideal bodily measurements, which might very well change with time!

Often when a couple marries you hear comments such as, “I can’t understand what he sees in her. He has such a good education and has such a fine future ahead.”

Or, “What in the world is she thinking of, marrying someone like him? She’s so refined and pretty!” But when you know the couple well, you will often find that the one who seems to have the advantages looks upon the other as the most attractive person in the world.

When one person loves another for a beautiful character and sweet personality rather than just the handsome face or harmonious measurements, love is lasting.

Personal warmth and unselfish love count for far more than

physical beauty that, after all, is only skin deep!



Building a Better Marriage

Shared Faith



- active in pursuing those beliefs
- easy access to ministers
- worshipping together
- participating together in church



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Slide 9: Shared Faith - The Tie That Binds

Modern research is confirming, over and over, that couples who hold common spiritual beliefs and who are **active in pursuing those beliefs** tend to enjoy warmer and more stable marriages.

Why? There are several reasons. One, of course, is that when problems come up they have **easy access to ministers** who are able and willing counsellors.

Another is that **worshipping together** binds people with strong

ties. You've heard this one before: "The family that prays together stays together."

And **participating together in church activities** develops bonds that aren't easily broken.

But religion means different things to different people. Its binding effect is only possible when the convictions and consequent lifestyle of husband and wife are compatible.

When there is a wide gulf between the two in matters of religion, disaster can be the result. In many religions, beliefs and practices can affect almost every practice of life.

They can decide how people dress, what they eat, what kind of entertainment they enjoy, how they spend money, how they bring up their children, matters of sex, and a thousand other small and large details of everyday life.

A Christian, for instance, can respect and associate with people of widely differing religious beliefs, and still cooperate with them in many ways.

But marriage is a completely different matter. Association within a family circle is so intimate that having differing religious convictions can cause tragedies between a husband and wife, or between parents and children.

A thousand practical concerns come up in everyday life, and when religious convictions guide marriage partners in two different directions, strife, tension, and unhappiness follow.

One wants to attend church while the other wants to go to the movies.

One observes a certain day of worship while the other works or wants to go on secular outings.

For one, smoking and drinking are relaxing; for his partner, they're a sin.

One wants to give a certain part of the family income to the church, but the other has very different plans for that money!

Numerous points of difference arise and invite disagreement. When your spouse's religion is not only a way of thinking but also a way of life, you soon find that you're married to that way of life too! And religious convictions can't be easily bent or altered without deep hurt and damaging feelings of guilt.

Can a husband continue to respect a wife if she throws overboard matters she used to consider to be sacred?

Can a woman respect her husband when he gives up his beliefs in an effort to please her or their friends?

All these observations might be helpful to a person contemplating marriage. "But I'm already in my marriage," you may be saying. And that's where the hard work comes in.

It's not easy to make a marriage run smoothly when differences already exist in this area of religion. It takes communication. It takes understanding. It takes a spirit of sacrifice. And it takes a willingness to compromise — in everything but your beliefs.

Of course, the happiest couples are the ones who are able to work out common ground for worship through open communication and an honest sharing of goals. If you can do that, without sacrificing your convictions, you are on your way to building a better marriage.



Building a Better Marriage When Faults Appear



“Surprise! I’m not perfect!”



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10

Slide 10: When Faults Appear

“Surprise! I’m not perfect!”

For some starry-eyed brides and grooms, it really does come as a surprise. Mr. Right has a few things wrong with him. Little Miss Angel has some very down-to-earth flaws.

When a couple comes up against this hard reality of life, the romance of the engagement period is bound to diminish.

It’s not enough that you’re now stretching income to meet expenses. adjusting to each other’s needs and habits, and coping with all the details of everyday living with someone new.

You also have to cope with the fact that you regularly discover

new unlovely character traits in your previously perfect partner. Suddenly marriage isn't exactly child's play.

“You're engaged to an angel, but you marry a human being” someone has said. The intimate knowledge of your spouse that marriage provides reveals traits and attitudes you may never have dreamed existed.

But there's some good news in all of this! You also discover some unsuspected good traits and qualities in your partner. In fact, if you've chosen wisely, you will unearth far more good traits than bad ones.

It's true that many people enter into marriage with a pretty good knowledge of their partner's weak points. And they often begin that marriage with a secret plan to change those points “later.”

The tragedy is not that we can't change our spouse, but that we, ourselves, tend to change for the worse.

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Building a Better Marriage When Faults Appear



- **The First Year...**

Seven Ages
of
the
Married Cold



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11

Slide 11: The Seven Ages of the Married Cold

You may have heard of The Seven Ages of the Married Cold. These are the recorded reactions of a husband to his wife having a common cold and how his response changes over seven years of marriage.

This is the first year: *“Sugar dumpling, I’m worried about my baby girl. You’ve got a bad sniffle and there’s no telling about these things with all this strep around.*

I’m putting you in the hospital this afternoon for a general check-up and a good rest. I know the food’s lousy but I’ll bring your meals in from Rossini’s. I’ve already got it arranged with the floor superintendent.”



Building a Better Marriage When Faults Appear



- **The Second Year...**

Seven Ages
of
the
Married Cold



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12

Slide 12: Second year

“Listen, darling, I don’t like the sound of that cough and I’ve called Doc Miller to rush over here.

Now you go to bed like a good girl, please?

Just for your Honey-pie.”



Building a Better Marriage When Faults Appear



- **The Third Year...**

Seven Ages
of
the
Married Cold



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13

Slide 13: Third year

“Maybe you’d better lie down, honey; nothing like a little rest when you feel off-colour.

I’ll bring you something to eat.

Have we got any soup?”



Building a Better Marriage When Faults Appear



- **The Fourth Year...**

Seven Ages
of
the
Married Cold



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14

Slide 14: Fourth year

“Look dear, be sensible.

After you feed the kids and get the dishes washed, you’d better hit the sack.”

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Building a Better Marriage When Faults Appear



- **The Fifth Year...**

Seven Ages
of
the
Married Cold



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15

Slide 15: Fifth year

“Why don’t you get yourself a couple of aspirin?”

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Building a Better Marriage When Faults Appear



- **The Sixth Year...**

Seven Ages
of
the
Married Cold



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16

Slide 16: Sixth year

“If you’d just gargle or something, instead of sitting around barking like a seal!”

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Building a Better Marriage When Faults Appear



- **The Seventh Year...**

Seven Ages
of
the
Married Cold



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17

Slide 17: Seventh year

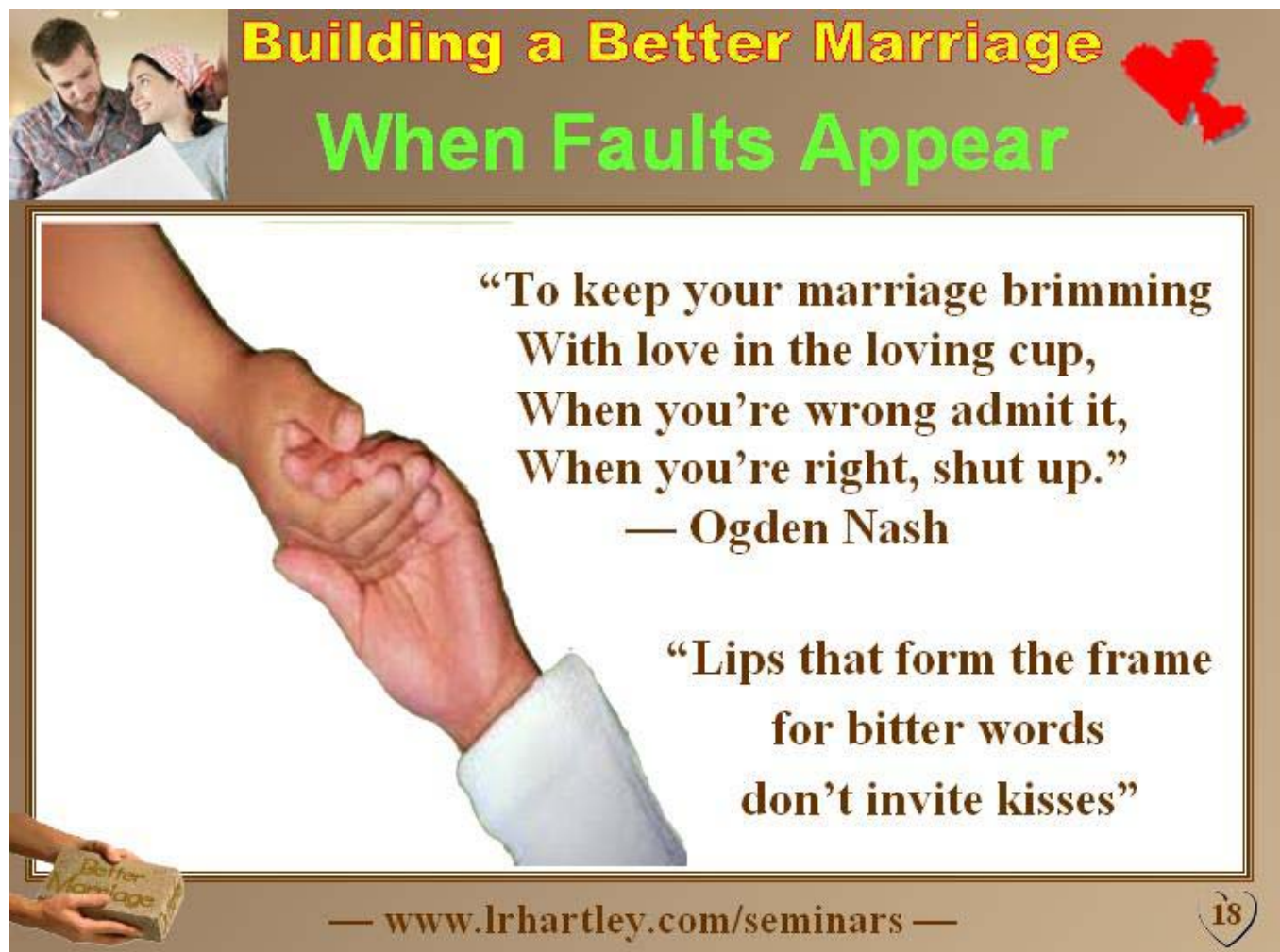
“For goodness’ sake, wife, stop sneezing!

Whatcha trying to do, gimme pneumonia?

Marriage is not about trying to change our spouse. Although through unconditional love we can set an example in better living, marriage is not a missionary exercise.

Someone once observed that if you board a train that’s plainly marked for a certain destination, then chances are slim that it will go somewhere else.

You couldn't change its course even if you tried. Many a man or woman has discovered too late that you can't change the lifestyle or character of the partner — and especially not for the better.



Building a Better Marriage
When Faults Appear

“To keep your marriage brimming
With love in the loving cup,
When you're wrong admit it,
When you're right, shut up.”
— Ogden Nash

“Lips that form the frame
for bitter words
don't invite kisses”

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18

Slide 18: hand - lifting up

A girl in counselling with her pastor before marriage told him how she planned to change her fiancé after the wedding.

The pastor didn't say much, but asked her to stand on top of his desk.

He then had her grasp his hand, and said, “Now, pull me up to where you're standing.” Of course she couldn't do it.

Then, without hurting her, he demonstrated how easy it was to

pull her down to his level. And she got the point!

Focus on being a better person not making a better partner. If you think you need a different kind or better partner, don't be surprised if your spouse reaches the same conclusion in regard to you!

Still, what do we do with these newly surfaced character flaws we discover in each other?

When disappointments come, the first inclination is to express them in words.

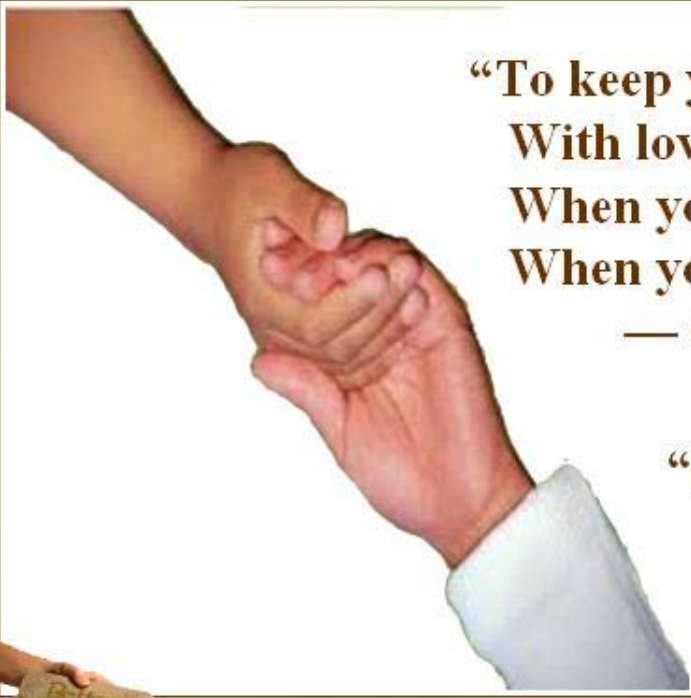
But is this always wise?

Problems do need to be discussed openly and honestly, and a solution sought together. But constant nagging only makes things worse.

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Building a Better Marriage When Faults Appear



**“To keep your marriage brimming
With love in the loving cup,
When you’re wrong admit it,
When you’re right, shut up.”
— Ogden Nash**

**“Lips that form the frame
for bitter words
don’t invite kisses”**

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Overlay Slide 18: (text)

“Lips that form the frame for bitter words don’t invite kisses.”

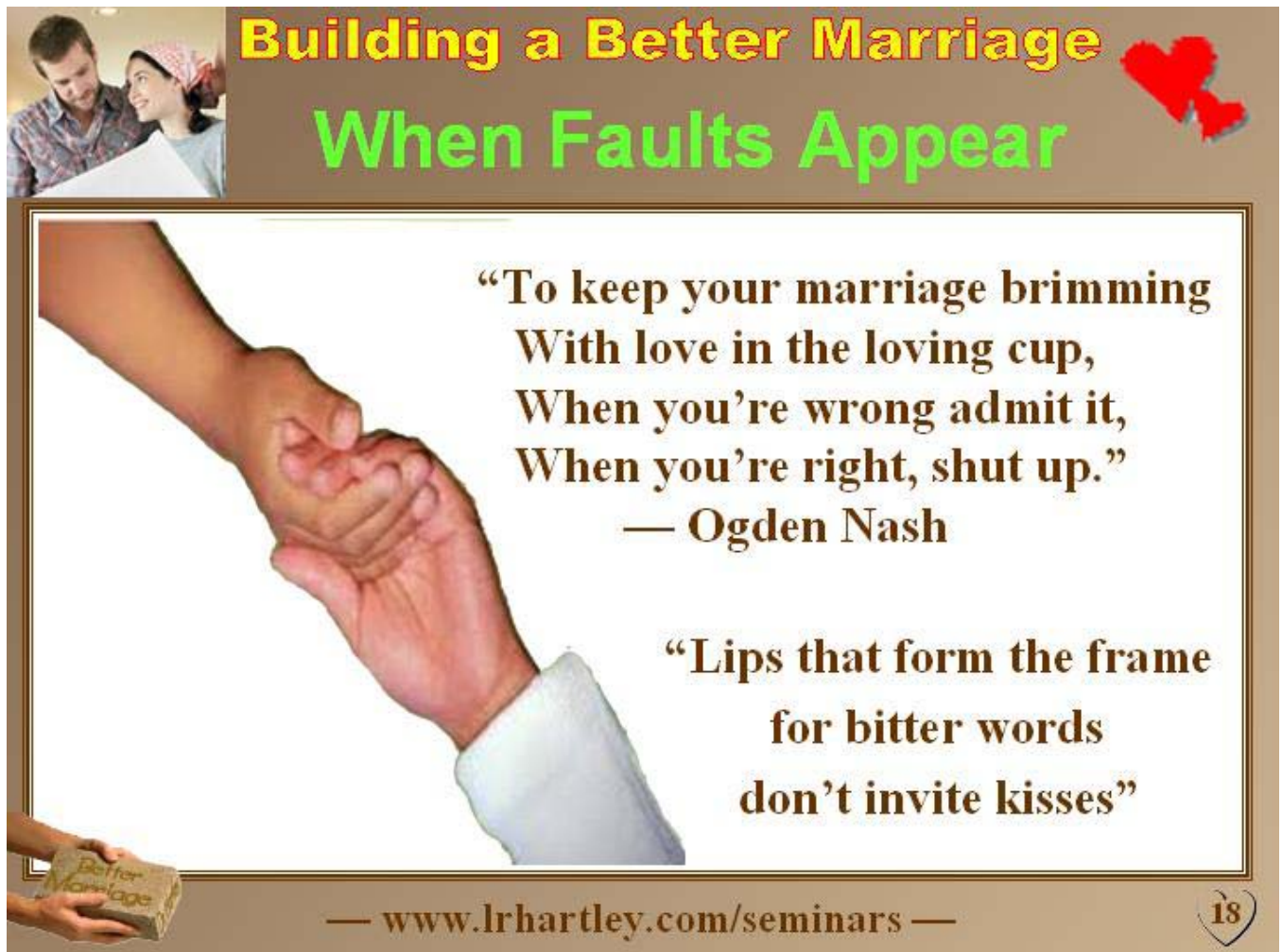
If you’re not impressed by that famous quotation, let me trot out one more, this one by Confucius (maybe): “Spouse with horse sense never becomes nag.”

It’s a fact of life that one person can very seldom fulfil all the longings and expectations of another.

Rare indeed is the husband who can live up to all the dreams a girl has before marriage.

And a flesh-and-blood wife that can perfectly measure up to a husband's innermost hopes and longings doesn't exist.

These realities have to be faced.



Building a Better Marriage
When Faults Appear

**“To keep your marriage brimming
With love in the loving cup,
When you’re wrong admit it,
When you’re right, shut up.”
— Ogden Nash**

**“Lips that form the frame
for bitter words
don’t invite kisses”**

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18

Overlay Slide 18: (text)

Ogden Nash penned this worthy piece of marriage advice many years ago:

“To keep your marriage brimming / With love in the loving cup,
/ When you’re wrong admit it, / When you’re right, shut up”

We need to make allowances for human weaknesses and shortcomings.

When your spouse's failings get you down, remember this: your partner has to put up with all of your faults too! A good marriage isn't necessarily a perfect one. It's a partnership in which both sides must be willing to give and take, to ask forgiveness and to forgive.

It's a wise idea, too, to remember that even in a good partnership, each individual needs some privacy, some room to "breathe," some freedom to be wrong once in a while. A

nd sometimes it may even be necessary to "agree to disagree without being disagreeable" on certain points . . . and always in a friendly spirit!



Building a Better Marriage

Wet Cement (Marriage Killers)



- 1. Overcommitment and physical exhaustion.**
- 2. Excessive credit and conflict over spending**
- 3. Selfishness**
- 4. Interference from in-laws**
- 5. Unrealistic expectations**
- 6. Space invaders**
- 7. Alcohol or substance abuse**
- 8. Pornography, gambling and other addictions**



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19

Slide 19: wet cement - The Marriage Killers

The society in which we live actively mitigates against marital stability.

There are dangers on all sides, and we must defend ourselves with all our energies.

In fact, I think it would be healthy at this point to name the great marriage killers. Any one of the following evils can rip your relationship to shreds if given a place in your lives.

Here is a list of them and comments for a few:

Overlay - 1. Over-commitment and physical exhaustion.

Beware of this danger. It is especially insidious for young couples who are trying to get started in a profession or in school.

Do not try to go to college, work full-time, have a baby, manage a toddler, fix up a house and start a business at the same time.

It sounds ridiculous, but many young couples do just that and are surprised when their marriage falls apart.

Why wouldn't it? The only time they see each other is when they are worn out!

It is especially dangerous to have the husband vastly over-committed and the wife staying home with a preschooler.

Her profound loneliness builds discontent and depression, and we all know where that leads.

You must reserve time for one another if you want to keep your love alive.

Overlay - 2. Excessive credit and conflict over how money will be spent.

Pay cash for consumable items or don't buy.

Don't spend more for a house or car than you can afford, leaving too few resources for scheduled date nights, weekends away, baby sitters and so on.

Allocate your funds with the wisdom of Solomon.

Overlay - 3. Selfishness.

There are two kinds of people in the world, the givers and the takers.

A marriage between two givers can be a beautiful thing. Friction is the order of the day, however, for a giver and a taker.

But two takers can claw each other to pieces within a period of six weeks. In short, selfishness will devastate a marriage every time.

Overlay - 4. Interference from in-laws.

If husbands or wives have not been fully emancipated from their parents, it is best not to live near them.

Autonomy is difficult for some mothers (and fathers) to grant, and close proximity is built for trouble.

Overlay - 5. Unrealistic expectations.

Some couples come into marriage anticipating white picket fences and rose-covered cottages, walks down primrose lanes, and uninterrupted joy.

This romantic illusion is particularly characteristic of women who expect more from their husbands than these men are capable of delivering.

The consequent disappointment is an emotional trap. Bring your expectations in line with reality.

Overlay - 6. Space invaders.

This killer will be difficult to describe or understand in such a brief context, but I'll try.

By space invaders, I am not referring to aliens from Mars but I am thinking of things that invade personal space.

My concern is for those who violate the breathing room needed by their partners, quickly suffocating them and destroying the attraction between them.

Jealousy is one way this phenomenon manifests itself.

Another is low self-esteem that leads the insecure spouse to trample the territory of the other. Love must be free and it must be confident.

Overlay - 7. Alcohol or substance abuse.

These are killers, not only of marriages but of people.

Avoid them at all cost.

Overlay - 8. Pornography, gambling and other addictions.

It is obvious to all that the human personality is flawed. Sin gives us a tendency to get hooked on destructive behaviours, especially early in life.

During an introductory stage, people think they can play with enticements such as pornography or gambling and not get hurt. In actuality few walk away unaffected.

For some, there is a weakness and vulnerability that is not known

until too late. Then they become addicted to something that tears at the fabric of the family.

This warning may seem foolish and even prudish to some of you, but I've made a 30-year study of those who wreck their lives.

Their problems often begin in experimentation with a known evil and ultimately end in death – either theirs or the death of their marriage.

Overlay- 9. Sexual frustration, loneliness, low self-esteem and the greener grass of infidelity.

Don't let wounds fester – see a physician – counsellor, priest, any professional that you can trust.

Overlay - 10. Business failure.

It does bad things, to men especially.

Their agitation over financial reverses sometimes sublimates to anger within the family.

Overlay - 11. Business success.

It is almost as risky to succeed wildly as it is to fail miserably in business.

The Hebrew philosopher Agur Ben Jakeh wrote in Proverbs 30:8, “Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread”.

Edward Fitzgerald said it another way: “One of the saddest pages kept by the recording angel is the record of souls that have been damned by success.”

It's true. Those who profit handsomely sometimes become drunk with power and the lust for more! Wives and children are forgotten in

this process.

Overlay - 12. Getting married too young.

Girls who marry between 14 and 17 years of age are more than twice as likely to divorce as those who marry at 18 or 19 years of age.

Those who marry at 18 or 19 are one and a half times as likely to divorce as those who marry in their 20s.

The pressures of adolescence and the stress of early married life do not mix well. Finish the first before taking on the second.

The slide features a title "Building a Better Marriage More Than Halfway" in yellow and green text. Below the title is a cartoon of two men standing on opposite sides of a chasm, with one saying "LET'S MEET HALFWAY". To the right is a keychain with a heart and the text "I LOVE MEETING HALFWAY", which is crossed out with a large red "X". In the bottom left corner, a hand holds a small box labeled "Better Marriage". The bottom of the slide contains the URL "www.lrhartley.com/seminars" and a small "21" in a heart shape.

Slide 21: More Than Halfway

“Marriage is a fifty-fifty proposition.” That’s one of the great false theories of all time!

In happy marriages both partners are generous with kind thoughts, words, and actions. Both must be ready to give more than they get.

There must be no questions about whose turn it is to do the next loving deed.

Each tries to outdo the other in showing love and respect. Both try to follow the counsel given by the apostle Paul to the Galatians: “Share each other’s troubles and problems, and so obey our Lord’s command. “ (6:2 TLB).

When confrontations occur, remind yourself and each other that you still are partners. And partners give all they have — the work of their hands and minds, and the love of their hearts.

Overlay Slide 21 (‘No’ circle)

Each must be ready to go more than halfway when opinions differ.

For ships at sea there is a rule that the one with the most manoeuvrability should give way to less agile craft.

This is a pretty good rule to follow in manage when confrontations threaten an otherwise harmonious relationship.

When you and your mate seem to be on a collision course, look for room to manoeuvre.

You will often find that your soft-spoken offer to compromise will get the two of you sailing in the same direction once again.

And it’s no small achievement to have a reputation for manoeuvrability in the rough sea of human relations!



Building a Better Marriage Easy to Live With



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22

Slide 22: Easy to Live With (1)

The children at a birthday party were bragging about their mothers. It all began when one little fellow said, “My mom makes the best pies in the whole world!”

Another chimed in with “My mother plays the piano better than anybody!”

A petite little miss, pointing to her dress, announced, “My mommy makes prettier dresses than they have in stores.”

Each child apparently had a mother who excelled all others in some respect.

But one small boy seemed to have nothing to say. The others stared at him until one boy, with an amazing lack of diplomacy, blurted out, “Can’t your mom do anything?”

With a mouth full of cake, the little boy mumbled, “Maybe not.” Then his eyes brightened, and he added enthusiastically, “But she’s awfully easy to live with!”

Who could ask for a higher recommendation?

There are wives who are wonderful cooks. They know a lot about calories and vitamins, fibre and cholesterol. They know how to prepare dishes that look great and taste great. Others are very clever with a sewing machine and save money by making clothes for the family.

Some wives have a reputation in the neighbourhood for their helpfulness. When someone is sick, or there is a birth or death, they are the first to offer their services.

Others hold important jobs and bring in salaries that maintain a high standard of living. Their skills in creativity or management place them in high demand.

There are even wives who possess all the talents I’ve just mentioned. But are they easy to live with?

Some husbands hold important positions in the world of business, literature, or politics. They’re admired by their associates for their abilities and initiative.

Their subordinates are quick to fulfil their slightest wish. And articles by and about them appear regularly in the newspapers.

But how do they act inside the walls of their homes, in the

intimacy of the family circle?

I know of families where everyone is happy — until the father comes home.

As soon as he steps inside the door, the atmosphere becomes electric with tension out of fear of his unbridled temper.

Yet on the job he's noted for his patience and perseverance in finding solutions to vexing problems.

In other families the husband and father is always too absorbed in his own concerns to listen to the little joys and sorrows of his children or to share his wife's interests and problems.

But in the office he's never too busy to help others or lend a sympathetic ear.

If that sympathetic ear works so well at smoothing things out at the office, why not try it out at home as well?

Why should the people who love us the most not see the same gracious side of our personality we take to work every morning?

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Building a Better Marriage
Easy to Live With

Radishes

Righteous Wrath

— www.lrhartley.com/seminars —

23

Slide 23: Easy to Live With (2) – Sense of humour

A sense of humour helps to keep things in balance too. In the close association with the family circle it's easy to “blow up” insignificant matters to a size completely out of proportion to their importance.

Something that only deserves to rate an emotional “two” can balloon into a “ten” within seconds.

But a little humour can puncture a hole in that balloon and bring it right back down to size.

One night a father came home exhausted after a long, hard day at the office. He had wrestled with weighty problems and difficult fellow

employees.

At the dinner table, after hearing of a minor domestic mishap that had occurred during the day, his pent-up anger vented itself in a loud and long tirade.

In the heavy silence that followed, his little boy turned to him and asked innocently, “Are you angry, Daddy?”

“I’m not angry,” answered Dad, having calmed down a bit. “I’m just filled with righteous wrath!”

Overlay Slide 23 (Radishes)

The last two words were above the little guy’s head, and they sounded to him like “radishes!”

Impressed by the explosion, he said, “I want to be full of radishes too!”

This remark had an immediate and salutary effect. Everybody burst out laughing and the atmosphere underwent a drastic change.

If we analyse the true causes of anger, they usually aren’t any more important than radishes – mainly just a sharp taste in the mouth that is soon gone!

Very seldom is there really sufficient cause to burst into a rage or lose one’s emotional balance.



Building a Better Marriage Easy to Live With



*"Please don't write so often
so I can enjoy this war in peace!"*

— www.lrhartley.com/seminars —

24

Slide 24: Easy to Live With (3) – Soldier reading mail

A young man married a very pretty girl just shortly before their country became involved in World War II.

The unromantic realities of trying to keep house in a drab apartment soon revealed a side of her that wasn't too attractive.

More and more frequently her constant complaints triggered bitter quarrels.

At that point the young husband was drafted and sent overseas. He was actually glad to get far away from her complaints and critical remarks.

But when her letters began to arrive, he discovered he hadn't

There will be days when you won't feel like being easy to live with!

And if you follow your emotional impulses of the moment, someone's scalp will hang from your refrigerator door before sundown.

But kindness is a principle, not a feeling. And healthy marriages survive on a couple's ability to act according to principles instead of the temporary feelings that may arise.

One of Aristotle's principles was that a person doesn't actually possess a virtue until he puts it into practice.

In other words, if you repeat acts of virtue often enough, you will become virtuous. And if you practice vice, you will become vicious.

Overlay Slide 25 Max Beerbohm

Sir Max Beerbohm wrote a story entitled, "The Happy Hypocrite." The title sounds like a paradox, doesn't it?

The story was about a character whose face personified evil. The man was faced with a dilemma: the woman he loved refused to marry him because he didn't look saintly.

To solve the problem, the suitor put on a mask with a kind face.

The young woman married him despite the face underneath the mask.

Her husband proved to be an attentive, unselfish husband.

One day in a moment of rage, an enemy abruptly tore off her husband's mask before his wife's eyes.

Instead of a cruel, grotesque face, the man had become what he

In the midst of his philosophical theories, we find an interesting human-interest story.

A young woman visited a well-known cold-hearted psychiatrist one day. Her marriage had gone on the rocks, and now she wanted to be divorced.

However, before leaving her husband she had the frenetic desire to hurt him as vehemently as ever possible. She hated him with all her heart. That was the only reason she solicited the psychiatrist's advice.

'Well, I know men,' said the psychiatrist. 'So I can tell you exactly what will hurt your husband's feelings more acutely than anything else. If you take my advice you simply stay with him for another three weeks or so.

In the course of that time you should treat him with treacherous friendliness. In fact, you ought to do him all the good you could ever imagine. Let him gradually be wrapped up in the deceptive idea that you love him sincerely.

And then, suddenly one day, you break away from him as cold as ice. That will hurt him to the core.

But we shall plan the rupture in more detail once you have practiced your fraudulent work upon his self-conceited mind. The departure should be made as scornful and cutting as possible.

But remember: now in the first round you are to load him with goodness and all imaginable tokens of love. And see to it that they look as genuine as possible.'

The woman thought that was a shrewd plan, and just sufficiently wicked and cynical to suit her purpose.

She joined it wholeheartedly and followed the instructions as closely as she could.

Finally one day she came back to the psychiatrist, as she had promised.

“Well, did you proceed exactly as I told you?” he inquired. “Yes, I have been heaping him with goodness and love every day since I left your consulting room,” she said.

“Good, and now, what date do you think would be most convenient to leave him?”

‘Leave him? Why should I leave him? I couldn’t think of leaving him now. Not for a moment. I love him. I have never loved him as much as I do today.’

Feelings of kindness grow as we do kind deeds. Feelings of love grow as we do loving deeds. Make kindness and love a daily practice in your marriage.

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Building a Better Marriage



The Little Things

- A happy home is ... “a place where our stomach gets three meals a day but our heart gets a thousand.”



— www.lrhartley.com/seminars —

27

Slide 27: The Little Things (picture of a bunch of violets)

In a contest for the best description of a happy home, the following entry rated high: “A place where our stomach gets three meals a day but our heart gets a thousand.”

This indicates the importance of the little attentions that feed the heart and reveal understanding one for the other.

Overlay Slide 27 (Violets)

Leaving for work one morning, a labourer gave his wife an extra hug. It was their tenth wedding anniversary. As he walked to work, he noticed some violets in the window of a florist’s shop.

He knew his wife loved violets, and stopped to consider the cost. They weren’t well off financially and now had problems that made

them conscious of every penny spent. But his love for his wife and his desire to show her some special attention on this day moved him to buy the flowers and take them back to her.

Then he had to run so as not to be late to work.

That evening the newspaper carried the story of a workman who had fallen off some scaffolding and been killed instantly. It was the man who had bought the violets for his wife that morning.

For the rest of her life she remembered those violets – the last expression of his love to her.

It's little things like violets that can make a marriage special.

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Building a Better Marriage



The Little Things

"In the enriching of marriage the big things are the little things. It is a constant appreciation for each other and a thoughtful demonstration of gratitude. It is the encouraging and the helping of each other to grow. Marriage is a joint quest for the good, the beautiful, and the divine."

- James E. Faust



— www.lrhartley.com/seminars —

28

Slide 28: The Little Things

“In the enriching of marriage the big things are the little things.

It is a constant appreciation for each other and a thoughtful demonstration of gratitude.

It is the encouraging and the helping of each other to grow.

Marriage is a joint quest for the good, the beautiful, and the divine.”

—James E Faust



Building a Better Marriage



The Little Things

A little more tenderness,
A little less creed.
A little more giving
A little less greed.
A little more we
A little less I.
A little more laugh
A little less cry.
A little more flowers
To lighten life's load
And fewer on graves
At the end of the road.



Song of Songs 2:15



— www.lrhartley.com/seminars —

29

Slide 29: The Little Things (Song of Songs 2:15 The little foxes ... spoil the vines)

But it's also "little things" that can lead a marriage to the brink of divorce.

In King Solomon's *Song of Songs* he talks about the little foxes that spoil the grapevines.

Small problems that remain unattended soon grow to monstrous proportions.

How much better to seek a solution when a problem first begins to be apparent.

It has been said, “There rarely was a fire so big that a cup of water couldn’t have stopped it, if it had been applied early enough.”

Sometimes it seems as though one partner is determined to get rid of the other. Of course he doesn’t plot to use poison or a gun. Not usually, anyway. But there are other methods almost as effective. A continuous stream of little insults and constant nagging may not kill the body, but they can kill the soul and make married life intolerable.

Overlay Slide 29 (text)

A mature love that binds two persons together in a lifelong companionship doesn’t happen suddenly or by chance. I can’t emphasize strongly enough that such a relationship is built up by the thousands of little and big things we do for and say to the one we love.

An unknown author sums it all up beautifully in this little verse:

A little more tenderness,
A little less creed.
A little more giving
A little less greed.

A little more we
A little less I.
A little more laugh
A little less cry.

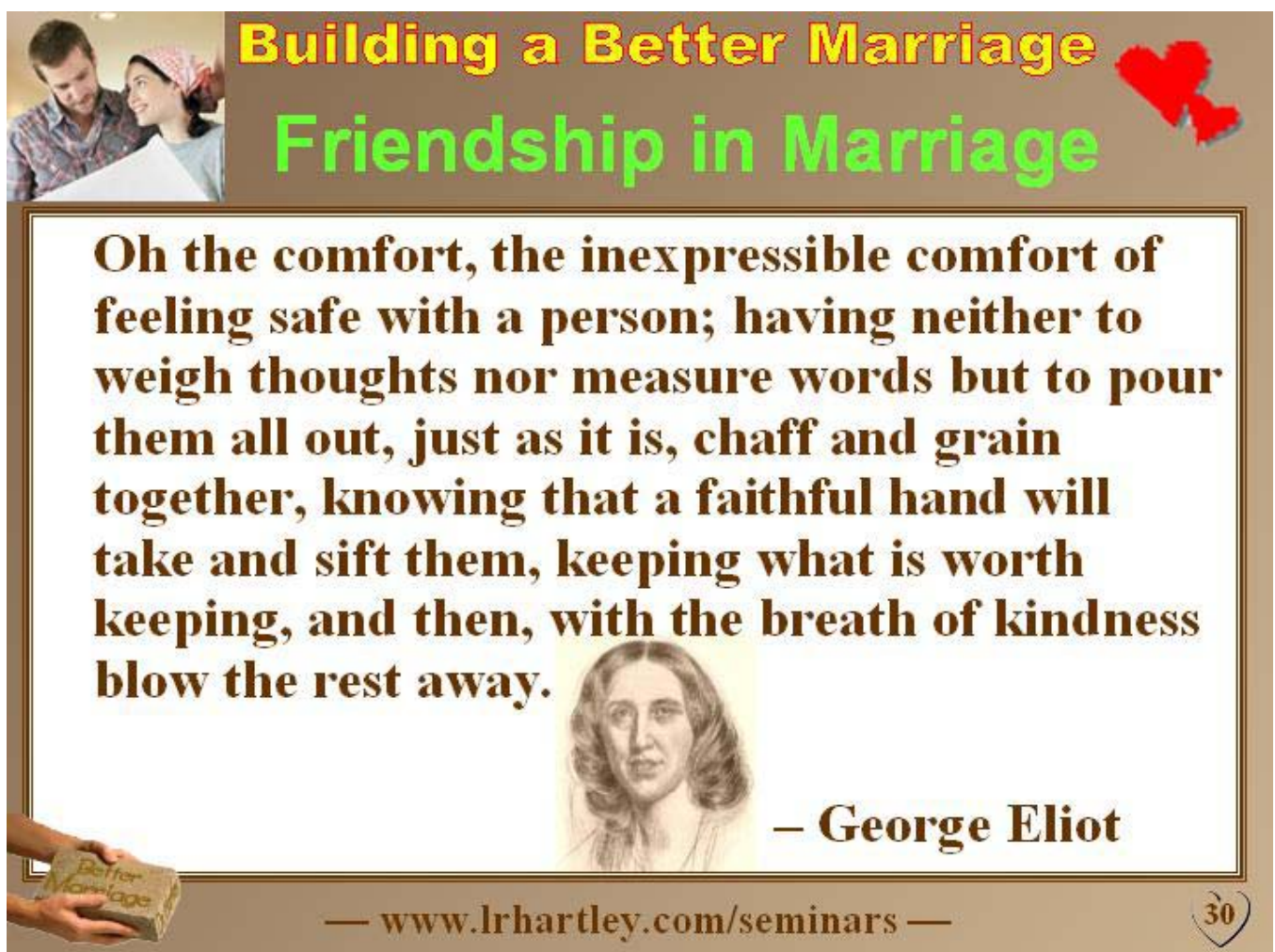
A little more flowers
To lighten life’s load
And fewer on graves
At the end of the road.

I hope you often give to your partner without thoughts of self. Yet

often there's immediate reward in the little things you do for your mate.

Speaking to a packed church in New York City, Phillip Brooks said, "Life gives back to you what you yourself put into it. But you receive it back many fold."

This truth will always be pertinent for husbands and wives, for it harmonizes with that age-old teaching from the Bible, "Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." Galatians 6:7 (RSV).



Building a Better Marriage
Friendship in Marriage

Oh the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person; having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words but to pour them all out, just as it is, chaff and grain together, knowing that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keeping what is worth keeping, and then, with the breath of kindness blow the rest away.

— George Eliot

— www.lrhartley.com/seminars —

30

Slide 30: Friendship in Marriage

One of the great needs today is for husbands and wives to be better friends!

Each of us yearns for the happiness and fulfilment that close friendship provides, and what better place to achieve this than in the close relationship between husband and wife?

Both partners need to feel they are needed, appreciated, and loved. After marriage your goal should not be to make your partner better, but to make your partner happy.

Often people feel disappointed and unhappy in their marriage because they find themselves barricaded behind walls of isolation. Marriage is the place to build bridges of understanding and trust.

Never forget that you yourself need someone you can feel close to – someone with whom you can think aloud without fear of being misunderstood.

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Overlay Slide 30 (poem)

In one eloquent sentence an English author has captured the freedom of friendship:

Oh the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person; having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words but to pour them all out, just as it is, chaff and grain together, knowing that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keeping what is worth keeping, and then, with the breath of kindness blow the rest away.

– George Eliot. (Mary Ann Evans 22 Nov 1819 – 22 Dec 1880
Married to John Walter Cross on 16 May 1880 – the year of her death)

And don't forget, either, that your companion has this same need.

Here's another description of friendship that should be the goal of every married couple:

I love you, not only for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you.

I love you, not only for what you have made of yourself, but for what you are making of me.

I love you for the part of me that you bring out.

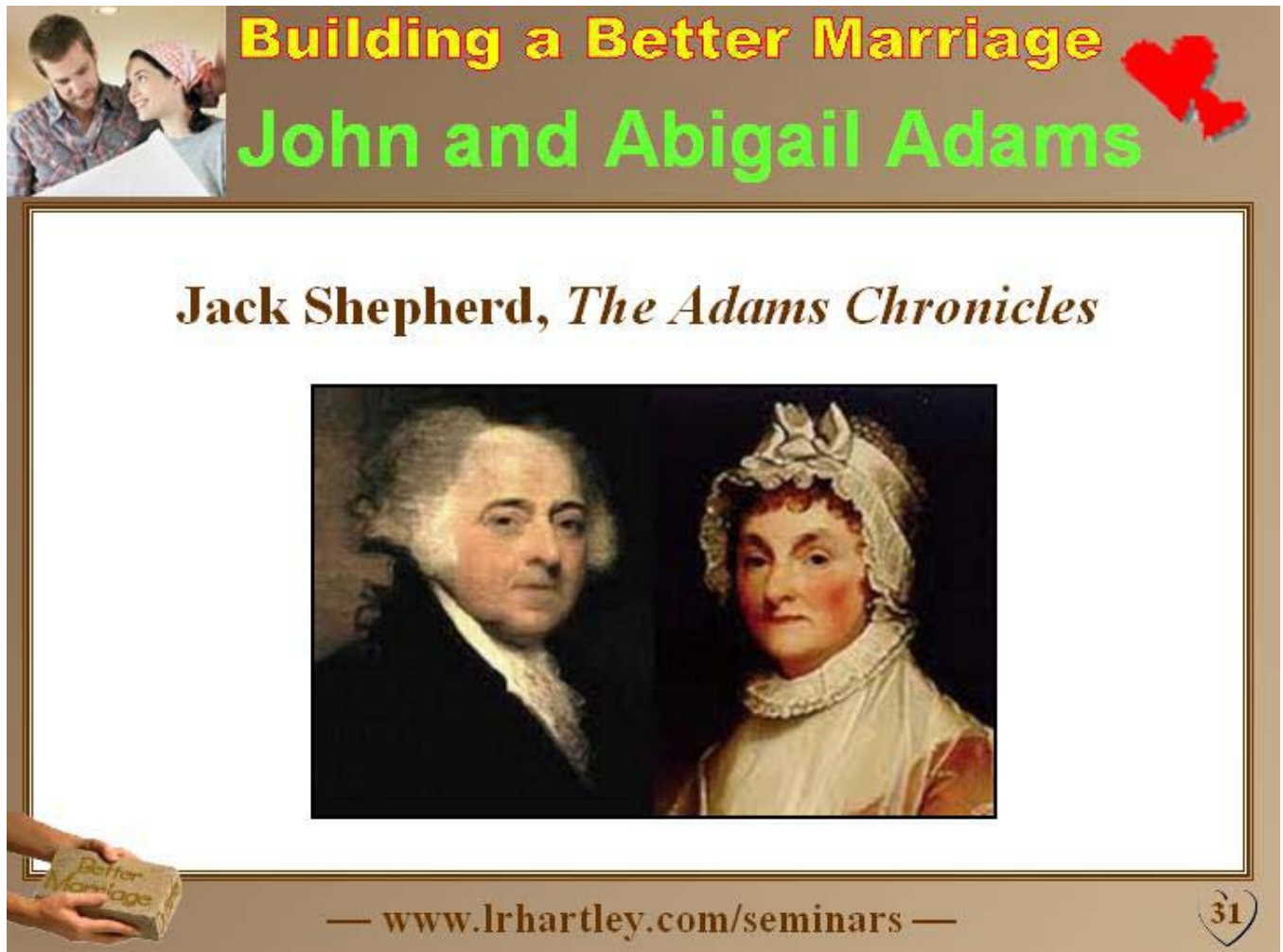
I love you for putting your hand into my heaped-up heart and passing over all the frivolous and weak things that you can't help seeing there, and drawing out into the light all the beautiful, radiant things that no one else has looked deep enough to find.

This kind of friendship builds bridges and tears down walls. But it isn't something that just happens automatically when two people "fall in love."

At first glance such a happy partnership looks effortless. In reality it is achieved only by determined effort, self-discipline, and


sometimes even sweat and tears.

Remember what I said earlier? Marriage is hard work!



Building a Better Marriage
John and Abigail Adams

Jack Shepherd, *The Adams Chronicles*



— www.lrhartley.com/seminars —

31

Slide 31: John and Abigail Adams

A beautiful example of real friendship between husband and wife is found in the marriage of John and Abigail Adams.

John was the first Vice President and later to become only the second President of the United States of America.

During their courtship and marriage, John Adams and Abigail Smith Adams exchanged over 1,100 letters.

Absent from home in the service of his country for months and

even years at a time, John Adams kept his wife informed not only of his activities but also of his thoughts, hopes, and fears.

And Abigail, running the farm and caring for their five children, frequently sat down in the evenings to write to her “dearest friend” letters that have become classics.

Fortunately for us today, John didn’t follow Abigail’s instruction to burn her letters.

In one of her letters, according to biographer Jack Shepherd in *The Adams Chronicles* (p76), Abigail admonished John to (quote) “Remember the ladies” while working for his country’s independence.

In this connection, referring to husbands in general, she wrote, “. . . but such of you as wish to be happy willingly give up the harsh title of master for the more tender and endearing one of friend.”

Married couples today would do well to take a cue from John and Abigail Adams.

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Slide 32: Construction Kit for Marriage Building

I am talking about this subject from a number of perspectives – from my own marriage [of 36 years] to my best friend Rosemary, from my work as a marriage and family counsellor over a thirty-year period and my own extensive research into marriages and families.

This is really about “How to Make Your Marriage Last”.

Most engaged couples are in love and being drawn to the other and they hope to and expect to spend the rest of their lives together.

The romance and the attraction may never fade but at some point for a marriage to last – we make a decision to actually love rather than just ‘being in love’. That’s the through good times and bad – in

sickness and in health type of love.

There are no perfect people and so there are no perfect marriages.

To make a marriage last and to build resilience and strength I will share 10 basic building blocks.



Building a Better Marriage Construction Kit

1. Respect

The slide features a central image of two wedding rings resting on a document with text that includes "Therefore, just as Christ loved the church, so let the wives love their husbands as the church loves herself, who presents herself to be sanctified by the word of water with the word, that he might cleanse her with the word by the water of the word." To the right is a cover of Men's Journal magazine featuring Russell Crowe. At the bottom left, a hand is shown holding a small box labeled "Better Marriage". The website www.lrhartley.com/seminars is listed at the bottom center, and a heart icon with the number 33 is in the bottom right corner.

Slide 33: 1. Respect

What does respect look like?

It is in how you speak to each other, how you acknowledge the other.

Do you always say hello and goodbye?

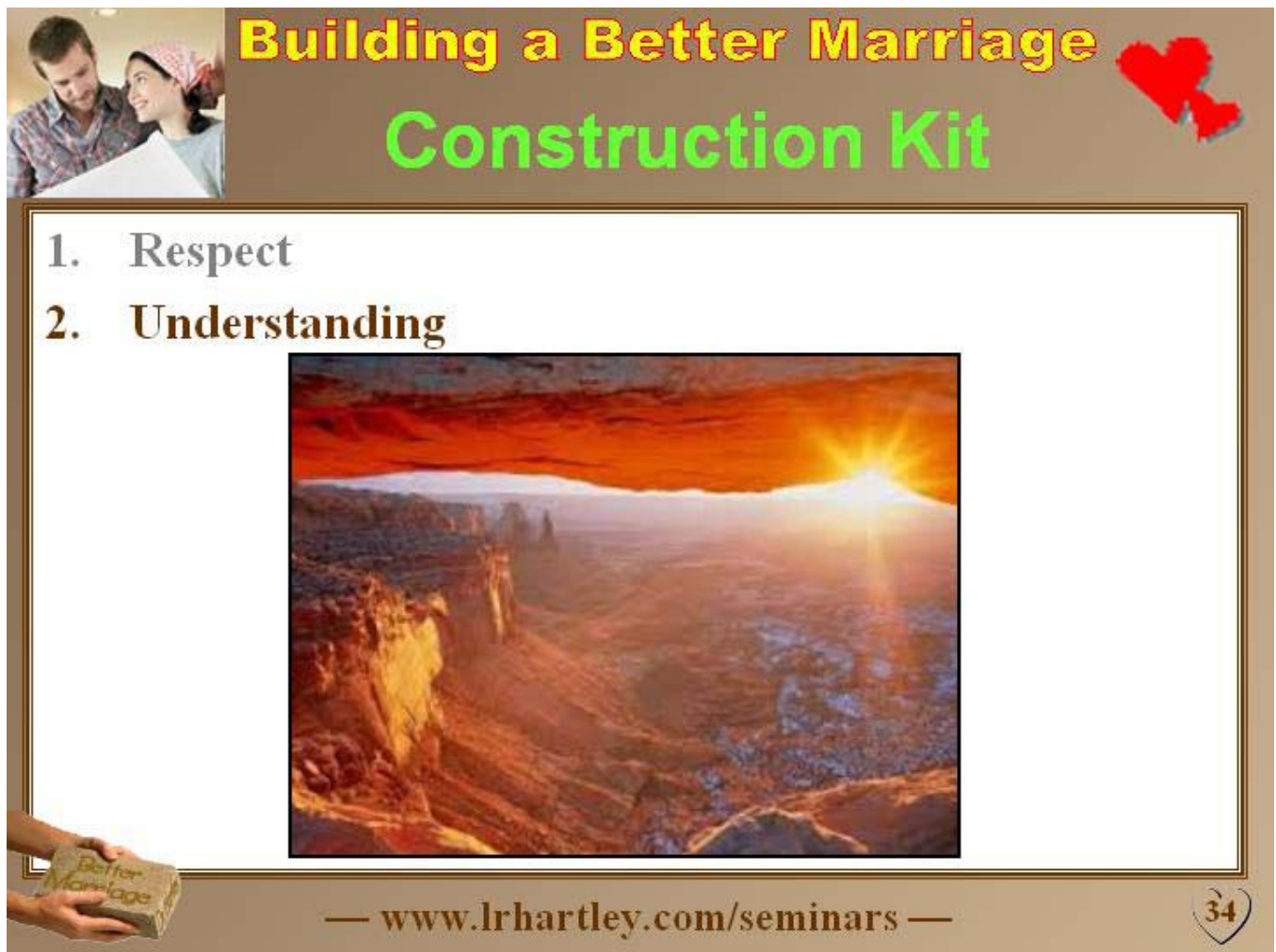
Do you consider what the other may need? Do you see the other

as a unique person of dignity?

Overlay Slide 33 (Russell Crowe)



An Australian actor by the name of Russell Crowe, in an interview with Men's Journal magazine said, "Look, when it comes to women, you are talking about mysteries that haven't been unravelled by the wisest scholars of all time. I'm not going to be able to do that. But I can teach my sons to respect them."

Ephesians 5:33 says that a husband "must love his wife as he loves himself," but all it says of wives is that "the wife must respect her husband."



Building a Better Marriage
Construction Kit

1. **Respect**
2. **Understanding**



— www.lrhartley.com/seminars —

34

Slide 34: 2. Understanding

Do you put yourself in the other's shoes? Do you try to see their

point of view? See the issue or the world from their perspective?

A farming couple and their daughter were visiting and viewing the Grand Canyon. As they stood on the edge of that massive abyss, each one responded with their observation.

The wife (obviously an artist) said, “Oh, what a beautiful scene to paint!”

The daughter said, “ Oh, what a wonderful example of the handiwork of God!”

The farmer said, “ Oh, what a terrible place to lose a cow!”

We all have our own lens or glasses that we view the world and everyone and everything around us. You may share some similar lens and glasses – but often not.

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Building a Better Marriage Construction Kit



1. Respect
2. Understanding
3. **Accepting Differences**



— www.lrhartley.com/seminars —

35

Slide 35: 3. Accepting Differences

Men and women are different. Really you say! Not just biologically – but emotionally and psychologically as well. You can't make your husband or wife a clone of you. They will never be just like you. So get over it and accept the differences and find ways that the differences complement rather than divide.



Building a Better Marriage Construction Kit



1. Respect
2. Understanding
3. **Accepting Differences**



Maggie & Egbert



— www.lrhartley.com/seminars —

36

Slide 36

A fellow named Egbert is attracted to a woman named Maggie. He asks her out to dinner; she accepts; they have a pretty good time. A few nights later he asks her out to a carols-by-candlelight program, and again they enjoy themselves. They continue to see each other regularly, and after a while neither one of them is seeing anybody else.

And then, one evening when they're driving home, a thought occurs to Maggie, and without really thinking, she says it aloud:

“Do you realise that, as of tonight, we've been seeing each other for exactly six months?”

And then there is silence in the car.

To Maggie, it seems like a very loud silence. She thinks to herself: O dear, I wonder if it bothers him that I said that. Maybe he's been feeling confined by our relationship; maybe he thinks I'm trying to push him into some kind of obligation that he doesn't want, or isn't sure of.

And Egbert is thinking: Wow. Six months.

And Maggie is thinking: But, hey, I'm not so sure I want this kind of relationship either. Sometimes I wish I had a little more space, so I'd have time to think about whether I really want us to keep going the way we are, moving steadily toward... I mean, where are we going? Are we just going to keep seeing each other at this level of intimacy? Are we heading toward marriage? Toward children? Toward a lifetime together? Am I ready for that level of commitment? Do I really even know this person?

And Egbert is thinking... so that means it was... let's see... December when we started going out, which was right after I had the car at the dealer's, which means... let me check the odometer... Whoa! I am way overdue for an oil change here!

And Maggie is thinking: He's upset. I can see it on his face. Maybe I'm reading this completely wrong. Maybe he wants more from our relationship, more intimacy, more commitment; maybe he has sensed even before I sensed it – that I was feeling some reservations. Yes, I bet that's it. That's why he's so reluctant to say anything about his own feelings. He's afraid of being rejected.

And Egbert is thinking: And I'm going have them look at the transmission again. I don't care what those morons say, it's still not shifting right. And they better not try to blame it on the cold weather this time. What cold weather? It might be June, but it's 27 degrees out, and this thing is shifting like garbage truck, and I paid those

incompetent thieves \$600.

And Maggie is thinking: He's angry. And I don't blame him. I'd be angry, too. I feel so guilty, putting him through this, but I can't help the way I feel. I'm just not sure.

And Egbert is thinking: They'll probably say it's only a 90-day warranty. Scumballs.

And Maggie is thinking: Maybe I'm just too idealistic, waiting for a knight to come riding up on his white horse, when I'm sitting right next to a perfectly good person, a person I enjoy being with, a person I truly do care about, a person who seems to truly care about me, a person who is in pain because of my self-centred, schoolgirl romantic fantasy.

And Egbert is thinking: Warranty? They want a warranty? I'll give them a warranty. I'll take their warranty and...

"Egbert," Maggie says aloud.

"What?" says Egbert, startled.

"Please don't torture yourself like this," she says, her eyes beginning to brim with tears. "Maybe I should never have...Oh dear, I feel so..." (She breaks down, sobbing.)

"What?" says Egbert.

"I'm such a fool," Maggie sobs. "I mean, I know there's no knight. I really know that. It's silly. There's no knight, and there's no horse."

"There's no horse?" says Egbert.

"You think I'm a fool, don't you?" Maggie says.

“No!” says Egbert, glad to finally know the correct answer.

“It’s just that...it’s that I...I need some time,” Maggie says.

(There is a 15 second pause while Egbert, thinking as fast as he can, tries to come up with a safe response. Finally he comes up with one that he thinks might work.) “Yes,” he says.

(Maggie, deeply moved, touches his hand.) “Oh, Egbert, do you really feel that way?” she says.

“What way?” says Egbert.

“That way about time,” says Maggie.

“Oh that,” says Egbert. “Yes.”

(Maggie turns to face him and gazes deeply into his eyes, causing him to become very nervous about what she might say next, especially if it involves a horse. At last she speaks.) “Thank you, Egbert,” she says.

“Thank you,” says Egbert.

Then he takes her home, and she lies on her bed, a conflicted, tortured soul, and weeps until dawn, whereas when Egbert gets back to his place, he opens a bag of corn chips, turns on the TV, and immediately becomes deeply involved in a rerun of a tennis match between two Czechoslovakians he never heard of. A tiny voice in the far recesses of his mind tells him that something major was going on back there in the car, but he is pretty sure there is no way he would ever understand what, and so he figures it’s better if he doesn’t think about it.

The next day Maggie will call her closest friend, or perhaps two

of them, and they will talk about this situation for six straight hours. In painstaking detail, they will analyse everything she said and everything he said, going over it time and time again, exploring every word, expression, and gesture for nuances of meaning, considering every possible ramification.

They will continue to discuss this subject, off and on, for weeks, maybe months, never reaching any definite conclusions, but never getting bored with it, either.

Meanwhile, Egbert, while playing tennis one day with a mutual friend of his and Maggie's, will pause just before serving, frown, and say: "Norm, did Maggie ever own a horse?"

And that's the difference between men and women.

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Building a Better Marriage Construction Kit



1. Respect
2. Understanding
3. Accepting Differences
4. **Make Connections**



— www.lrhartley.com/seminars —

37

Slide 37: 4. Make Connections

Make efforts every day to connect – in person, by phone, or email or text messages if that's your thing.

A marriage works well when you are both able to share at different times during a 24-hour period.

That can be hard to do if both are working, or one or the others work or family takes them away. It doesn't have to be deep and meaningful.

Family-life counsellor Ann O'Brien says that she will often ring her husband Peter during the day and tell him what she had for lunch and just to see how he's going.

She says, “Think of electricity – if the cord isn’t plugged in – nothing works. There might be back up power but eventually it will run out.”

Overlay Slide 34 (hug)

Connect through touch. According to an article in the Sunday Herald Sun, cited in Signs of the Times, April 1998 (p26), ‘The mere act of touching someone you love may add years to their life and yours.

According to California researchers, in order to maintain emotional and physical health, a person needs eight to ten “meaningful touches” – that’s a kiss, a hug or a stroke – by a parent, friend or spouse each day.

They say that if an aggressive type-A personality male hugs his wife several times a day, he can add up to two years to his life. Touching lowers blood pressure and raises the amount of blood haemoglobin for both the hugger and the hugged.’

Take your time touching and don’t rush into expecting or groping for intimacy too soon – a surprise hug can result in the ice being broken, or your nose being broken.



Building a Better Marriage Construction Kit



1. Respect
2. Understanding
3. Accepting Differences
4. Make Connections
5. Effective Communication



**“A happy marriage is a long conversation
which always seems too short.”
— Andre Mauroi**



— www.lrhartley.com/seminars —

38

Slide 38: 5. Effective Communication

Andre Mauroi wrote, ‘A happy marriage is a long conversation which always seems too short.’

God gave us two ears for active listening, two eyes for sharing a tear, two shoulders for comforting, two arms for loving, but only one mouth. So we should listen twice as much as we talk!

Easier said than done of course. Communication is effective when we can get our message across to the other and have it understood and we can respond to the other’s message in the same way.

Communication is effective when we are active not reactive and

we are trying to understand the other's message.



Building a Better Marriage **Construction Kit**



Effective Communication Tools for Building Intimacy:

- **Look for the good & give compliments**
- **Praise your partner as much as possible**
- **Take time to listen to each other**
- **Be assertive. Use "I" statements**
- **Be respectful and honest**
- **When issues arise, seek solutions & avoid blaming**
- **Give your relationship the same priority and attention you gave it when you were dating**



— www.lrhartley.com/seminars —



Slide 39: Communication Tools for Building Intimacy

Here are some communication tools for building intimacy

Overlay Slide 39 (Look for the good & give compliments)

1. Look for the good in your partner and give him/her compliments.

It takes no more energy to look for the good things as it does the bad. To look for the good in others is the best way to find the good in yourself.

I call this the Pollyanna Approach – after a comment by the lead

character in a 1913 novel of that name by Eleanor H. Porter.

On page 215 of my edition, the author has Pollyanna saying, ‘When you look for the good in somebody, expecting to find it, you surely will.’

Overlay Slide 39 (Praise your partner as much as possible)

2. Praise your partner as much as possible.

The Reverend Morris Chalfant tells of a couple who were celebrating their golden wedding anniversary. The husband was asked what the secret was to his successful marriage.

As the elderly are wont to do, the old gentleman answered with a story.

His wife, Sarah, was the only girl he ever dated. He grew up in an orphanage and worked hard for everything he had. He never had time to date until Sarah swept him off his feet. Before he knew it she had managed to get him to ask her to marry him.

After they had said their vows on their wedding day, Sarah’s father took the new groom aside and handed him a small gift. He said, “Within this gift is all you really need to know to have a happy marriage.” The nervous young man fumbled with the paper and ribbon until he got the package unwrapped.

Within the box lay a large gold watch. With great care he picked it up.

Upon close examination he saw etched across the face of the watch a prudent reminder he would see whenever he checked the time of day . . . words that, if heeded, held the secret to a successful marriage. They were, “Say something nice to Sarah.”

Overlay Slide 39 (Take time to listen to each other)

3. Take time to listen to each other.

- Listening involves hearing. If you're thinking about what you're going to say next, you're not hearing your partner and you're not listening.

- Listen to understand – not to judge.

- Use active listening, which involves summarizing your partner's comments before you share your reactions or feelings.

Overlay Slide 39 (Be assertive. Use "I" statements)

4. Be assertive. Share your feelings by using "I" statements (i.e. I feel... or I think...).

Communication must be from the personal "I" perspective. If you begin sentences with "you always" or "you never" it encourages a defensive or reactive response.

Overlay Slide 39 (Be respectful and honest)

5. Be respectful and honest

Being respectful, open and totally honest with each other is the foundation for any marriage-building project. Gordon MacDonald, in his book *Magnificent Marriage* writes, "We lay [our] foundation ... when we establish within our marriage that acts of the past and the facts of the present will not necessarily be held against us in the future.

Overlay Slide 39 (When issues arise, seek solutions & avoid blaming)

5. When issues arise, avoid blaming each other and seek solutions.

Gary Smalley writes, “Conflict is not only [a] wall, but also [a] door ... for conflict is virtually “inevitable” ... and it is only in passing through conflict that we are able to reach the deeper levels of intimacy.

If only more people realized this they would not view it as a destructive source, but a creative one when confronted in a positive manner!

Conflict is, in reality, a tool to bring two people closer together – as long as those two do not allow it to lead to contention.”

Overlay Slide 39 (Give your relationship the same priority and attention you gave it when you were dating)

6. Give your relationship the same priority and attention you gave it when you were dating.

The Reverend Lowell D. Streiker writes, ‘When Barbara and Jim were dating, Barbara became concerned over the lavish amount of money Jim was spending on her.

After an expensive dinner date, she asked her mother, “What can I do to stop Jim from spending so much money on me?”

Her mother replied simply, “Marry him.”



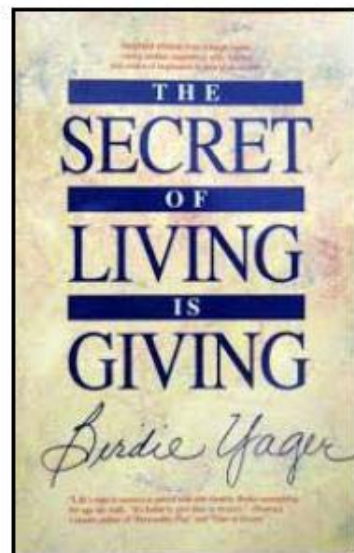
Building a Better Marriage Construction Kit



1. Respect
2. Understanding
3. Accepting Differences
4. Make Connections
5. Effective Communication
6. **Expressing Feelings Effectively**

*“Words are awfully important to a woman.
Tell her how you feel about her.”*

— Birdie Yager



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40

Slide 40: 6. Expressing Feelings Effectively

Birdie Yager wrote in her book, *The Secret of Living is Giving*, “Words are awfully important to a woman. Tell her how you feel about her.”

We all have many different feelings. Feelings often just happen. The important aspect is how we express those feelings – especially negative ones.

We may feel angry – but erupting like a volcano is unhelpful and may be harmful to those around us.

The hard work is in finding an effective and useful way to express what we feel. It is neither good to keep all our feelings to

ourselves nor to express everything we feel – we need to find the right balance.



Building a Better Marriage
Construction Kit

1. Respect
2. Understanding
3. Accepting Differences
4. Make Connections
5. Effective Communication
6. Expressing Feelings Effectively
7. **Negotiating Conflict**

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41

Slide 41: 7. Negotiating Conflict

Conflict is a normal and natural part of any marriage. You are two different people and have unique and individual backgrounds, ways of communicating, feeling and thinking.

There will be thousands of decisions and compromises and negotiations every. Challenges will come your way.

You need to fight fair and use all of the tools I have mentioned so far to do this – respect, honesty, understanding, accepting differences, communicating and expressing feelings effectively.



Building a Better Marriage Construction Kit



1. Respect
2. Understanding
3. Accepting Differences
4. Make Connections
5. Effective Communication
6. Expressing Feelings Effectively
7. Negotiating Conflict
8. **Affirmation and Gratitude**



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42

Slide 42: 8. Affirmation and Gratitude

Make sure you let the other person know all the good things that you love and like in them.

Remind them often of what you appreciate – the mundane and ordinary as well as the special and extraordinary things they do.

We do easily take each other for granted.

We are also very quick to let someone know when they are wrong or have done something unloving – but we need to make an effort to acknowledge and affirm all the positive things.

My wife and I leave around the house little notes or cards to each other that begin “I love you because ...”.

Strong and healthy marriages are also about the boring and the ordinary and minutia of life.



Building a Better Marriage Construction Kit



1. Respect
2. Understanding
3. Accepting Differences
4. Make Connections
5. Effective Communication
6. Expressing Feelings Effectively
7. Negotiating Conflict
8. Affirmation and Gratitude
9. Sharing Power



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43

Slide 43: 9. Sharing Power

Both of you are valuable and unique and both have different gifts to offer in your marriage.

No one needs to be in charge all the time.

There may be merit in each of you taking the lead in certain tasks or areas of your relationship and married life and household together – a bit like a see-saw – that goes up and down for both to have fun!

For example even though we jointly own our car, I usually take

the lead in doing the driving.

My wife Rosemary usually takes the lead in reading an inspirational reading at mealtimes.



Building a Better Marriage Construction Kit



1. Respect
2. Understanding
3. Accepting Differences
4. Make Connections
5. Effective Communication
6. Expressing Feelings Effectively
7. Negotiating Conflict
8. Affirmation and Gratitude
9. Sharing Power
10. Forgiveness



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Slide 44: 10. Forgiveness

During a couple's counselling session, the wife asked me why men are so uncommunicative?

Before I had an opportunity to respond, her husband blurted out, "You'd learn to keep your big mouth shut too if every time you opened it you got into trouble with the likes of her."

We are human and so we are imperfect and we make mistakes. We will sometimes hurt each other unintentionally or even intentionally.

Forgiveness is integral to making a marriage last and building resilience into your love.

Corrie ten Boom likened forgiveness to letting go of a bell rope. If you have ever seen a country church with a bell in the steeple, you will remember that to get the bell ringing you have to tug awhile.

Once it has begun to ring, you merely maintain the momentum. As long as you keep pulling, the bell keeps ringing. Miss ten Boom said forgiveness is letting go of the rope.

It is just that simple. But when you do so, the bell keeps ringing. Momentum is still at work.

However, if you keep your hands off the rope, the bell will begin to slow and eventually stop.

It is like that with forgiveness.

When you decided to forgive, the old feelings of un-forgiveness may continue to assert themselves. After all, they have lots of momentum.

But if you affirm your decision to forgive, that unforgiving spirit will begin to slow and will eventually be still.

Forgiveness is not something you feel, it is something you do. It is letting go of the rope of retribution.



Building a Better Marriage Forever Possibilities



**If you want a
better marriage
make it a priority,
work on it,
practice daily,
communicate
and succeed!**



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45

Slide 45: Forever Possibilities

What your marriage is like now isn't nearly as important as what it can be like in the future.

In practically every home and marriage there is great potential for finding joy and satisfaction.

Regardless of what the past has been, you can make a new start on a foundation of mutual understanding and affection.

With a little twist on the words of a popular saying, "Today is the first day of the rest of your married life together."

Do you really want a happy marriage? Make it your top priority!

Work on it! Practice being kind and loving regardless of how you feel. Practice daily communication.

Decide each morning that you will give more than you take.

You'll soon find, as did that woman at Paderewski's dinner party, that life in a beautiful marriage grows better each day!

E. G. White, a nineteenth-century author who often wrote on marriage and the home, shares this insight: "Let there be mutual love, mutual forbearance. Then marriage, instead of being the end of love, will be as it were the very beginning of love. The warmth of true friendship, the love that binds heart to heart, is a foretaste of the joys of heaven."

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Building a Better Marriage

Question Time



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46

Slide 46: Question time

Before we go on to our question time, I would like to draw your attention to the **Handout** “Don’t bother trying to rekindle your marriage”. This contains a homework exercise on “Building a Better Marriage rather than trying to find a spark to rekindle a tired one.”

EXTRACT: Don’t bother trying to rekindle your marriage

There is a popular belief in the marriage and relationship world that when the doldrums hit and you find yourself more numb than really alive, you should look for ways to get back what you once had.

Call it a spark. A zest. A passion. Whatever. The point is, something’s missing and since you once had it – you can go back and find it again.

Wrong.

Life is not lived backwards. Our past is important. Who we once were is what our spouse found attractive (since that person caught the eye of your spouse and reeled them in the rest of the way). But the previous version of you is long gone and trying to go back and find him/her is a path to more frustration.

While you may be able to produce a brief spark by reminiscing about when you were dating, it won't be a lasting spark.

The main reason – you're up against the fugacious “love drug” in your brain. When you first met and fell in love with your spouse you both experienced a chemically induced high.

Your brain flooded with a chemical called Phenylethylamine (PEA), which remains in your brain from 6 months to 2 years. PEA produces a feeling of euphoria, a sense of belonging, and a feeling of obsession (which is why you want to talk and be with your new found love every moment). As PEA fades over time (and it will) many people believe that you can recreate the same levels of emotion within the relationship. Problem is, you can't.

You cannot go back and manufacture PEA in your brain within the same relationship (although I'm sure the pharmaceutical companies are trying to figure out a way).

What you can do, better than finding a new partner, is to increase the levels of the perdurable “love drug” Oxytocin in your system.

Oxytocin is known as the “bonding” chemical. It produces the deep connection to others, the lasting bond that long term relationships create. Oxytocin is released when you bond with another person – the most intense experiences are mother and infant while

nursing and during orgasm. But other contacts create this bond as well: massages, eye contact, hugs, holding hands.

On the other end of the spectrum, going through crisis and tragedy together dramatically increases the levels of Oxytocin as well. This is why it is worth it to work through the rough patches in marriage.

What it produces is a deeper, more lasting bond.

Now that you know what you're up against when you face the monotonous times in marriage, here's a couple of ideas to help up the Oxytocin in your life:

1. Catch romance where you can

You can learn to build romance at unexpected times — during your daily commute, while doing laundry — you can even do this through a long, lingering kiss or just holding hands. In other words, the next time you hear find you've got a couple of minutes to yourselves, make use of it — give that Oxytocin a boost.

2. Nurture your separate selves

Having your own hobbies isn't a sign you are drifting apart. On the contrary, developing individual interests allows for a richer life as a couple. Taking personal responsibility for your own well-being relieves the your spouse of the pressure to “provide” happiness — so go ahead and nurture some solo adventures. That'll also keep each of you stocked with plenty of adventures to chat about, which also tightens your bond.

3. Take on a project together

Separate interests aside, exploring new ground together is also important since it strengthens your history of shared experiences (Oxytocin boost). Commit a daily walk together. Create a project for

your home or kids. Big projects together offer increases in Oxytocin because they are often filled with highs and lows, but the lows will create a bond as well. Couples who take on adventures together get a sense of daring and accomplishment that can really kick up their chemistry!

4. Touch each other (sexually and non-sexually)

The boost of connection you receive from human touch is huge. And every touch doesn't have to be sexual in nature. Sure, sexual touch is important and will increase the connection, but so will non-sexual touch. Hold hands, hug, sit close beside one another, cuddle. Each little (or big) gesture can cause a boost of Oxytocin for both of you.

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Building a Better Marriage

Effective Listening



1. Stop talking!



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48

Supplementary section – Ten Commandments of Effective Listening

Slide 48: 1. Stop talking!

You cannot listen when you are talking. You will only be thinking about what you are going to say next instead of paying attention to what the other person is trying to say. Consciously focus your attention on the speaker.



Building a Better Marriage

Effective Listening



2. Put the speaker at ease.



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49

Slide 49: 2. Put the speaker at ease:

Relax, smile, look at the speaker and help that person feel free to talk. Look and act interested.

Remove distractions: turn off the TV; close the door; stop what you are doing, and pay attention.



Building a Better Marriage



Effective Listening

3. Pay attention to nonverbal language.



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50

Slide 50: 3. Nonverbal language

Pay attention to the nonverbal language of physical gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, and body posture.

There is always great debate, but one authority on nonverbal language says that 55 percent of the message meaning is nonverbal, 38 percent is indicated by tone of voice, and only 7 percent is conveyed by the words used in a spoken message.

Few people know how to listen to the eyes; what a tapping foot means; a furrowed brow; clenched fist; the biting of nails.

These often reveal the key feelings behind the words.



Building a Better Marriage



Effective Listening

4. Listen for what is not said.



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51

Slide 51: 4.Listen for what is not said.

Ask questions to clarify the meaning of words and the feelings involved, or ask the speaker to enlarge on the statement.

People often find it difficult to speak up about matters or experiences that are very important or highly emotional for them.

Listen for how the speaker presents the message.

What people hesitate to say is often the most critical point.



Building a Better Marriage

Effective Listening



5. Know exactly what the other person is saying.



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52

Slide 52: 5. Know exactly what the other person is saying.

Reflect back what the other person has said in a “shared meaning” experience so you completely understand the meaning and content of the message before you reply to it.

A good listener does not assume they understand the other person.

You, as the listener, should not express your views until you have summarized the speaker’s message to his satisfaction.



Building a Better Marriage

Effective Listening



6. Be aware of "tune out" words.



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53

Slide 53: 6. Be aware of "tune out" words.

These are words that appear in the media that strike an emotional chord in the listener and interferes with attentive listening (e.g. abortion, nuclear war, communism, homosexuality).

Avoid arguing mentally.

Listen to understand, not to oppose.



Building a Better Marriage

Effective Listening



7. Concentrate on "hidden" emotional meanings.



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54

Slide 54: 7. Concentrate on "hidden" emotional meanings.

What are the real feelings behind the words?

What is the tone of voice saying?

What does the emphasis on certain words mean?

Notice how the meaning of the following question is changed when you change the emphasis from one word to the next. **What** do you want? What **do** you want? What do **you** want? What do you **want**?



Building a Better Marriage

Effective Listening



8. Be patient. Don't interrupt the speaker.



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55

Slide 55: 8. Be patient. Don't interrupt the speaker.

This is disrespectful and suggests you want to talk instead of listen.

Allow plenty of time for the speaker to convey ideas and meaning.

Be courteous and give the speaker adequate time to present the full message.



Building a Better Marriage



Effective Listening

9. Hold your temper! Keep emotions in check.



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56

Slide 56: 9. Hold your temper!

Try to keep your own emotions from interfering with your listening efficiency.

When emotions are high, there is a tendency to tune out the speaker, become defensive, or want to give advice.

You don't have to agree to be a good listener.

Don't argue! Even if you win, you lose.



Building a Better Marriage

Effective Listening



10. Empathize with the speaker.



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57

Slide 57: 10. Empathize with the speaker.

Try to “walk in the other’s moccasins” so you can feel what that person is feeling and understand the point of view the speaker is trying to convey.

FIN

"I Love You Because..." Coupons

Cut out the attached coupons and after "I love you because..." write a reason for your love. Make it personal. Examples might be "I value your loving touch" or "I feel secure and at peace when I am with you" or "The warmth of your embrace reaches right to my heart".

After "This coupon is valid for..." write some personal action or gift that you are willing to give to your beloved – no strings attached. Make this personal too, even intimate or sexual if you choose. Examples might be "a back or feet massage" or "a night walk on the beach" or "15 minutes of listening without interrupting" or "breakfast in bed". Do not put a use-by-date on the card. And don't wait for a special occasion to give it to your beloved – do it today.

For further suggestions see
www.lrhartley.com/seminars/endorsements.pdf



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