

MARRIAGE  
**COURSE**

After “I Do”  
THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO NEWLYWED LIFE

MODULE 1  
CONNECTEDNESS



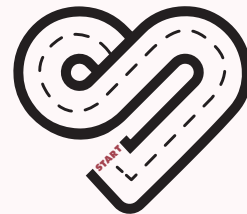
## MAIN IDEA

# CONNECTEDNESS IS THE FOUNDATION TO A GREAT MARRIAGE.

**CONNECTEDNESS** IS A \_\_\_\_\_ BUT ALSO AN \_\_\_\_\_.

It's kind of like accidentally plugging your phone in halfway overnight. Everything else in the phone can be in pristine condition, but if the connection is not right, nothing else can work. Plus, you may not realize it wasn't connected until it's too late and you're in a hurry or really need your phone to work! But if you're intentional about making that connection, you'll never be running on empty. You have to be connected before you can be fully charged and let your marriage work like you want it to!

**MARRIAGE**  
ISN'T THE  
DESTINATION,  
IT'S THE  
**START.**



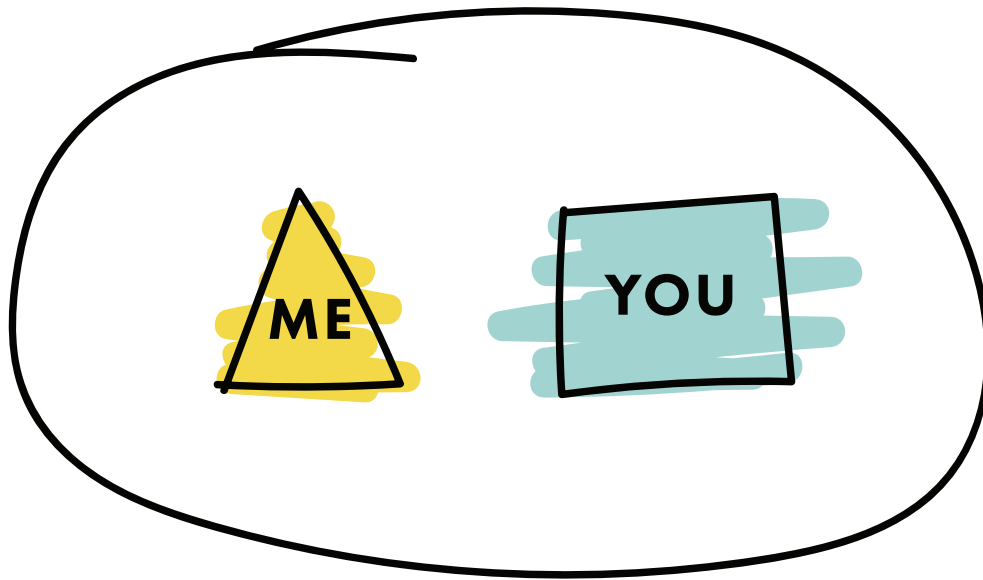
## CONNECTEDNESS CAN LOOK **DIFFERENT**

Signs of disconnection can look different from person to person. The key is to recognize it in yourself & your spouse and stop it before it gets too far. Talk through these questions to connect:

- **What are my signs of disconnection?**
- **Have you seen them in me?**
- **When I see them in you, how can I help us get back on track?**

# THE COST OF CONNECTION

Because connection is different depending on the person, it can seem like it comes with a price. It might feel like you're *sacrificing your individuality* in order to connect well with your spouse, but we beg to differ! Take this illustration for example:



## OUR MARRIAGE

It might seem simple, and that's because it is! **You and your spouse are different (hence the different shapes)**. When you get married, *you don't merge shapes, you just surround yourself with a circle of connectedness!* And actually, you now have *more room to grow together*. You're not losing yourself, but **becoming a better version of yourself**. The stronger that circle of connection is, the more you'll become each other's biggest cheerleader.

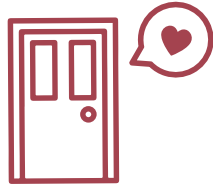
THE CORE OF **WHO YOU ARE** WON'T CHANGE,  
BUT THE CORE OF **WHAT YOU DO** MIGHT.

# HOW TO STAY CONNECTED

According to studies by Relationship Researcher, Dr. Linda Duncan, there are four powerful points of connectedness between couples. When done well on a regular basis, they can have a significant impact on the intimacy level in your marriage!



**HOW YOU  
WAKE UP**



**HOW YOU PART  
FOR THE DAY**



**HOW YOU GREET  
EACH OTHER**



**HOW YOU SAY  
GOODNIGHT**

WHAT'S ONE WAY YOU CAN MAKE  
THESE POINTS A HABIT **EVERY DAY**?



## REMEMBER

♥ Appreciation can be a great way to break barriers to connection. Even just saying “thank you” can make a difference. ***Make it more fun with this DIY date night!***

♥ Great connection leads to **stronger intimacy**, both emotional and physical! They feed into each other - when one grows, they both grow.

♥ Other ways to strengthen your connection include implementing a **regular date night**, cultivating **great communication and listening skills**, and learning how to have **healthy conflict** – luckily, all topics we will be covering! Hooray!



MARRIAGE  
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# After “I Do”

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO NEWLYWED LIFE

**MODULE 2**

SEX AND INTIMACY



## MAIN IDEA

OPEN THE DOOR TO CONVERSATION ABOUT HOW YOU WILL CREATE YOUR OWN SEXUAL JOURNEY TOGETHER.

# WHY IS TALKING ABOUT SEX OFTEN DIFFICULT TO DO?

It can be *embarrassing...* It can feel *shameful...* and *tbh*, it can just be *awkward*.



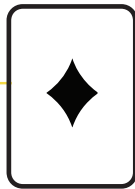
## The Awkwardness Activity

Pull out of a deck of cards one heart, one diamond, one spade, and one club (the value of the cards don't matter). Put the rest of the deck to the side. Shuffle up the four cards you pulled. Without seeing the face of the cards, take turns drawing a card from the stack of four. Whichever suit you draw, follow the instructions below.



### HEARTS

Kiss your spouse for 30 seconds without them kissing you back



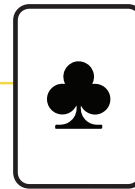
### DIAMONDS

Open the back door and bark loudly like a dog for 30 seconds



### SPADES

Whisper something sexy in your spouse's ear, except in a cartoon-like voice



### CLUBS

Demonstrate 5 different stylish or sexy ways to open the refrigerator



DIY DATE NIGHT

Truth or Dare

(WITH A FLAIR)

# TIPS FOR HAVING GREAT CONVERSATIONS ABOUT SEX



**SET THE MOOD  
(CANDLES, MUSIC, ETC.)**



**HAVE A SEX-TALK  
OBJECT ON HAND**



**AFFIRM EACH OTHER'S  
FEELINGS**



**BE NAKED OR HOWEVER  
YOU FEEL SEXY**



**WRITE DOWN YOUR  
THOUGHTS BEFORE TALKING**



**DON'T FORGET TO  
LAUGH AND HAVE FUN**



## IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT

### ♥ Which of us probably wants sex more often? Why?

- *What affects me wanting to have sex more often or less often than you?*
- *What do I need from you (my spouse) based on how often I want to have sex?*
- *How can we meet in the middle with our differences?*

### ♥ How do I get heated up? Am I more of a microwave or a crock pot?

- *To what extent am I a microwave or crock pot?*
- *What do I need to make the mood right for me to have sex? How can I help you with your answer?*

### ♥ What do we want our sexual journey to look like, both now and in the future?

- *After looking at these questions (and the ones below), what do we want or need to talk about first?*
- *When should we talk?*

# OTHER IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS

## ♥ How often should we have sex?

- How many times a week?
- What happens if we don't have sex as many times as we said we would in a given week?

## ♥ What puts me in the mood for sex?

- What conditions have to be right?
- What turns me on?
- What turns me off?
- Does it matter what I wear or what my spouse wears?

## ♥ What do I like during sex?

- What positions do I like best?
- What kind of foreplay do I like?
- Are there other ways I like to be stimulated besides intercourse?
- What times of the day do I like? (morning, afternoon, night, all the above?)
- Is the bed the only place? Do I feel most comfortable in the bedroom, or are there other places I like to have sex (that won't get us arrested)?
- What positions, times, places, or forms of stimulation are off the table?

## ♥ What new things would I like to try that we haven't done yet?

## ♥ When it comes to your (my spouse) experience with us having sex, what is important to me?

- Is it important to me you are as into it as I am?
- Is it important to me you experience an orgasm?
- How important is your enjoyment to me?

## ♥ What's meaningful to me after sex?

- Do I like to lie in bed and cuddle?
- Do I want to take a shower (provided you're not already in the shower)?
- What do I not want to do after sex?





MARRIAGE  
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MODULE 3

MONEY



## MAIN IDEA

MANAGING FINANCES AND SETTING FINANCIAL BOUNDARIES AS A TEAM IS IMPORTANT TO THE HEALTH OF YOUR MARRIAGE.

# WHY IS **MONEY** SUCH A BIG PART OF MARRIAGE?

**MONEY** IS ONLY A \_\_\_\_\_. IT WILL TAKE YOU WHEREVER YOU WISH, BUT IT WILL NOT REPLACE YOU AS THE DRIVER.



**HOW YOU VIEW MONEY**  
CAN DISRUPT YOUR CONNECTION

## **MONEY AND LOW LIBIDO**

- When you're **stressed about finances**, sex is often the **last thing** on your mind.
- Stress is a chemical reaction in your brain. When you're stressed, your body will produce high amounts of the hormone cortisol. When high amounts of cortisol are produced for a long period of time, other hormones will be suppressed. **The sex hormones are the first to be attacked.**

## **MONEY AND STRESS**

- Being **stressed creates a division** between spouses.
- The longer money stress builds up in your relationship, **the less sex and intimacy will be present** between the two of you. In this season, it becomes easier to distance yourself from each other *without even realizing it.*

## MONEY AND SEX

- Sex has been proven to **alleviate stress-induced tension**. If stress reduces the desire for sex, how do you set the mood?
- It starts with **communication** and **commitment**.
- **Designate a time to talk about finances and make a plan to walk the financial road together**. And regardless of how much money is in the bank, *make a commitment to keep sex and intimacy a priority in your marriage.*

## MONEY AND LIFE

- Keep financial stress at a minimum by developing a **plan to manage your money**.
- The two of you can be on the **same page**, even when buying an item that's not in your spending plan.

### HOW DO EACH OF YOU VIEW MONEY?

# The Newlywed Money Game

Sit back-to-back with a piece of paper and a pen, answer these questions, then compare and discuss your answers with your spouse.

## 1. WHICH ONE OF YOU IS MORE LIKELY TO...

- Spend \$100+ on new shoes?
- Save up for a splurge purchase rather than spontaneously buying it?
- Give money to someone in need?
- Want to go out to eat every night of the week?
- Put together a spending plan for us to follow?
- Feel limited/trapped by a spending plan?
- Splurge on home goods? Groceries? Clothes?



## 2. WHAT ROLE DID MONEY PLAY IN YOUR HOME GROWING UP?

# IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT

- ♥ How did your parents handle money? Were they open with you about it?
- ♥ Did your parents teach you finance basics? If not, where did you learn/did you?
- ♥ What are things your parents did financially that you liked? That you didn't like?



## HOW TO KEEP THE CONVO GOING

SET A **WEEKLY OR BIWEEKLY MEETING** TO DISCUSS YOUR \_\_\_\_\_ . REVISIT YOUR GOALS AS NEEDED. (DIFFERENT SEASONS OF LIFE BRING DIFFERENT NEEDS.)



### OUR FINANCIAL GOALS ARE:

- ★ \_\_\_\_\_
- ★ \_\_\_\_\_
- ★ \_\_\_\_\_
- ★ \_\_\_\_\_

- ♥ Are we prepared if one of us loses a job? How can we be more prepared?
- ♥ How would you feel if I got a raise?
- ♥ Would you be comfortable making a major purchase now/soon? (Car, house, etc.)
- ♥ If one of us desires a career change, do you feel good about talking through the financial implications together?
- ♥ What do you think should be our goal with paying off debt?

# WHAT IS A **SPENDING PLAN**?

It's a way to allocate your funds monthly. Look at what you regularly spend on. Rather than minimizing your money by looking at where it goes each month, create a spending plan that allows you to allocate your funds to the maximum!

## Our Spending Plan

MONTHLY INCOME	
INCOME #1	\$
INCOME #2	\$
TOTAL	\$

HOUSE EXPENSES	BUDGET	ACTUAL	DIFFERENCE	NOTES
RENT/MORTGAGE	\$	\$	\$	
HOME INSURANCE	\$	\$	\$	
ELECTRICITY/GAS	\$	\$	\$	
WATER/SEWAGE	\$	\$	\$	
TELEPHONE	\$	\$	\$	
INTERNET	\$	\$	\$	
CABLE/SATELLITE TV	\$	\$	\$	
GARBAGE/RECYCLING	\$	\$	\$	
AUTO EXPENSES	BUDGET	ACTUAL	DIFFERENCE	NOTES
CAR PAYMENT	\$	\$	\$	
GAS	\$	\$	\$	
MAINTENANCE	\$	\$	\$	
REPAIRS	\$	\$	\$	
AUTO INSURANCE	\$	\$	\$	
LIVING EXPENSES	BUDGET	ACTUAL	DIFFERENCE	NOTES
GROCERIES	\$	\$	\$	
CELL PHONE	\$	\$	\$	
CLOTHING	\$	\$	\$	
PET CARE	\$	\$	\$	
ENTERTAINMENT	\$	\$	\$	
DINING OUT	\$	\$	\$	
PERSONAL CARE	\$	\$	\$	
SUBSCRIPTIONS	\$	\$	\$	
TRAVEL	\$	\$	\$	
CHARITY/GIFTS	\$	\$	\$	
DECOR	\$	\$	\$	
DEBT	BUDGET	ACTUAL	DIFFERENCE	NOTES
STUDENT LOANS	\$	\$	\$	
CREDIT CARDS	\$	\$	\$	
MEDICAL BILLS	\$	\$	\$	
OTHER	\$	\$	\$	
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$			

# UNDERSTANDING GOALS FOR YOUR FINANCES

## Create your own money mission statement!

Your money mission statement should encompass your family's view on spending, saving and the purpose of money. How important is it to save? To buy/have nice things? To share with the less fortunate? This statement could set the tone for generations to come. Write it down here:

### OUR MONEY MISSION STATEMENT

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## LIVE. GIVE. OWE. GROW.

You have to have money to live, you'll want to have money to give, you're gonna have money to owe (even if you're debt-free, everyone pays taxes), and you'll need money as you grow older. **Make sure your money is set up to handle these 4 things and everything else will fall into place.**

### CONCLUSION

## MONEY DOESN'T HAVE TO BE A MASSIVE STRESSOR IN MARRIAGE.

*Use the tools we've provided to help you communicate about money. If you have specific financial questions, seek out the counsel of a financial advisor.*

MARRIAGE  
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**MODULE 4**

COMMUNICATION





COMMUNICATION HAS A MAJOR  
IMPACT ON YOUR MARRIAGE AND  
CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN  
CONNECTION AND DISCONNECTION.

## HOW TO BE **AN AMAZING LISTENER**

### **1 BE PRESENT**

If you're in a place filled with distractions, move to a different room. If timing is bad and you just can't take your mind off of that big presentation you have to give tomorrow, say so and propose a different time to talk so you can give your full attention. Prioritizing your ability to listen and sharing your desire to listen well with your spouse will make them feel more heard before they even open their mouth.

### **2 ASK QUESTIONS AND ENGAGE IN CONVERSATION**

And while your spouse shares, show you're truly listening by asking clarifying questions, like, "What did you do after that?" or "Wow, that does sound hard." In heated conversation, this can also help you make sure you're tracking with the conversation and not making assumptions. Plus, it will help you fight the temptation you feel to start crafting your response instead of listening to the very end.

### **3 PAY ATTENTION TO BODY LANGUAGE**

Have you ever wanted to grab your partner's face and say, "Look at me when I'm talking to you"? Let's just be honest, it's so easy to tell when someone is "fake listening." They may be looking at you and even nodding, but you know they're actually thinking about their response to you or what kind of dessert they want later... Solve this problem by turning toward your spouse when they're speaking and make eye contact with them. Maybe even hold their hand.

# WATCH OUT FOR THESE COMMUNICATION KILLERS



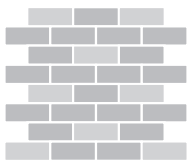
## \_\_\_\_\_ : **blaming or finding fault**

It's different than critiquing or complaining. This killer is an attack on your partner and is often filled with words like "always" and "never." It can often lead to or be a result of unhealthy/unresolved conflict. This is where the other 3 killers start, and is likely the one you may see in your relationship the most at this stage.



## \_\_\_\_\_ : **turning your back to a perceived attack**

This killer often happens when we feel accused without reason and feel like a victim of our partner's criticism. It often includes shifting the blame to the other person.



## \_\_\_\_\_ : **refusing to communicate/shutting down**

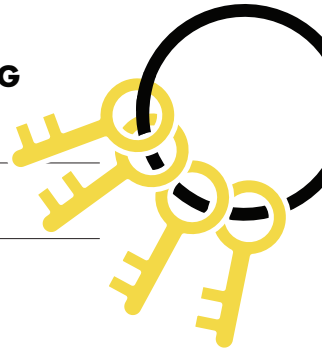
With this killer, the partner not only shuts down, but completely disengages from the spouse. It often can look like the silent treatment, leaving the room, or busying yourself from your spouse.



## \_\_\_\_\_ : **an attitude of looking down on your spouse**

It is a lack of respect. The goal of this killer is to make the other person feel dispensable and despised. The universal sign is eye-rolling. It takes a position of moral superiority over your spouse.

# FOUR KEYS TO **UNLOCK COMMUNICATION**



## **1 BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT SPENDING TIME TOGETHER TALKING**

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## **2 USE MORE "I" STATEMENTS AND LESS "YOU" STATEMENTS**

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## **3 BE SPECIFIC**

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## **4 AVOID MIND READING**

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### **GUIDELINES FOR HAVING A**

# **Difficult Conversation**

- You are a team
- Listen to your spouse's heart
- Be open to ideas different from yours
- Be curious and ask questions

**CONCLUSION**

**COMMUNICATION IS ABOUT LISTENING, BEING WATCHFUL FOR COMMUNICATION KILLERS AND BEING CLEAR WHEN YOU SPEAK.**

*Recognizing we all have made missteps communicating with our loved ones allows you to course-correct and be intentional about spending time talking with your spouse. Communication is a bridge that connects your heart to your spouse's heart.*

**IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU NEED A MORE IN-DEPTH LOOK AT THIS TOPIC, CHECK OUT THIS MARRIAGE COURSE:**

**5 DAYS TO *Better* COMMUNICATION**  
IN YOUR MARRIAGE

**CLICK HERE**

**LET'S NOT FORGET:**

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MARRIAGE  
**COURSE**

# After “I Do”

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO NEWLYWED LIFE

**MODULE 5**

DATE NIGHT



MAIN IDEA

DATE NIGHT IS CRUCIAL FOR A HEALTHY,  
“ON-PURPOSE” MARRIAGE.

## WHAT ARE DATES AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

**DATE (NOUN) /DĀT/:** ANY \_\_\_\_\_ TIME SPENT  
TOGETHER FOR THE SAKE OF TIME SPENT TOGETHER.

**OR, ANOTHER WAY TO DEFINE IT:**

**D**esignated  
**A**lone  
**T**ime for  
**E**njoyment



THE POINT OF  
DATES IN MARRIAGE IS  
**Connection,**

LET'S NOT FORGET:

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# The Date Night Quiz

When the statements below are read on the video, give a “thumbs up” if you think it’s true, or a “thumbs down” if you think it’s false.

- If you both get it right, kiss each other on the lips!
- If you both get it wrong, have a five-second pillow fight!
- If one is right and one is wrong, the person who got it right gets to choose the place the wrong person kisses them!



**DATE NIGHTS HAVE TO BE DONE AT NIGHT.**

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**DATE NIGHTS ARE ALL ABOUT GOING OUT.**

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**YOU DON'T HAVE TO SPEND MONEY ON DATE NIGHT.**

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**YOU SHOULD TRY TO UP YOUR GAME AND FIND SOMETHING MORE NOVEL OR FUN THAN THE LAST DATE NIGHT.**

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**WHO YOU ARE WITH IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN WHAT YOU DO ON DATE NIGHT.**

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**IT'S THE HUSBAND'S JOB TO PLAN THE DATE NIGHT.**

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**YOU DON'T HAVE TIME FOR DATE NIGHT.**

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# THE FACTS OF **DATES** IN MARRIAGE

## Dates should be on purpose.

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- Avoid falling in the trap that any time spent together is a date.
- The intention should be purely for the sake of time spent together.
- Call the date “a date.” It’s a title of intention. Hey, let’s have some date time!

## Dates can be planned or spontaneous.

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- It’s obviously okay to plan a date ahead of time.
- Feel free to call.

## Dates don’t have a time limit.

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- Whether it’s a 20-minute break from work or a weekend-long trip
- The point is CONNECTION!

## Traditional date nights are fine!

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- Go all out with dinner, dancing, the works!
- Just don’t feel confined to these kinds of dates.



“

DATES GOT YOU TO A PLACE WHERE YOU WANTED TO MARRY EACH OTHER. IF YOU WANT TO STAY MARRIED, THEN **KEEP DATING YOUR SPOUSE!**

ANDY TRAUB



# DATE JOURNEY JOURNAL

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE OF DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
PLACE

## WHAT WE DID:

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**WAS THIS INTENTIONAL TIME SPENT TOGETHER FOR THE SAKE OF TIME SPENT TOGETHER?**

**YES**

**NO**

## RATE THE DATE:

WORST

BEST



\_\_\_\_\_  
SPOUSE'S NAME



\_\_\_\_\_  
SPOUSE'S NAME

## THE BEST PART OF THIS DATE:

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**WOULD WE DO THIS DATE AGAIN?**

**YES**

**NO**



# DATE JOURNEY JOURNAL

DATE OF DATE

PLACE

## WHAT WE DID:

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WAS THIS INTENTIONAL TIME SPENT TOGETHER FOR THE SAKE OF TIME SPENT TOGETHER?

YES

NO

## RATE THE DATE:

WORST

BEST



SPOUSE'S NAME



SPOUSE'S NAME

## THE BEST PART OF THIS DATE:

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---

WOULD WE DO THIS DATE AGAIN?

YES

NO



# DATE JOURNEY JOURNAL

DATE OF DATE

PLACE

## WHAT WE DID:

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---

WAS THIS INTENTIONAL TIME SPENT TOGETHER FOR THE SAKE OF TIME SPENT TOGETHER?

YES

NO

## RATE THE DATE:

WORST

BEST



SPOUSE'S NAME



SPOUSE'S NAME

## THE BEST PART OF THIS DATE:

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---

---

WOULD WE DO THIS DATE AGAIN?

YES

NO



# DATE JOURNEY JOURNAL

DATE OF DATE

PLACE

## WHAT WE DID:

---

---

---

---

WAS THIS INTENTIONAL TIME SPENT TOGETHER FOR THE SAKE OF TIME SPENT TOGETHER?

YES

NO

## RATE THE DATE:

WORST

BEST



SPOUSE'S NAME

1

2

3

4

5

SPOUSE'S NAME

1

2

3

4

5

## THE BEST PART OF THIS DATE:

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WOULD WE DO THIS DATE AGAIN?

YES

NO



## CONCLUSION

BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT DATING YOUR SPOUSE ON THE REGULAR.



Looking for a guided date night experience? Check out our **Free Facebook LIVE Virtual Date Nights**. Each date is packed with fun activities that will unlock the keys to a happier, healthier marriage and deepen the connection with your spouse!

**GET STARTED**

**LET'S NOT FORGET:**

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MARRIAGE  
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After “I Do”  
THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO NEWLYWED LIFE

**MODULE 6**

UNDERSTANDING NEEDS



## MAIN IDEA

WHEN BOTH OF YOU ARE FOCUSED ON **MEETING EACH OTHER'S NEEDS**, YOUR MARRIAGE BECOMES **CLOSER, DEEPER AND STRONGER.**

## DEFINING **NEEDS**

**NEED** IS DEFINED AS SOMETHING \_\_\_\_\_ TO HELP ME BE A HEALTHIER VERSION OF MYSELF SO THAT WE CAN HAVE A BETTER \_\_\_\_\_.



## EXAMPLES OF **NEEDS**

We're all different. We have different opinions, different backgrounds, different preferences, different taste buds, different ideas of fashion, different points of view, and yup... you guessed it: *different needs*.

- **Communication**
- **Alone Time**
- **Help around the house**
- **Fun times with you**
- **Physical Affection**
- **Sex**
- **Stability**
- **Emotional Needs**
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

# Tell Me What You Need

## STEP 1: PICK YOUR TOP 3

Each of you, think through (or write down) your **top 3 needs** from the list provided or any that you can think of. *Please don't share with your spouse yet.*

### TOP 3 NEEDS OF

\_\_\_\_\_  
SPOUSE'S NAME

1

\_\_\_\_\_

2

\_\_\_\_\_

3

\_\_\_\_\_

### TOP 3 NEEDS OF

\_\_\_\_\_  
SPOUSE'S NAME

1

\_\_\_\_\_

2

\_\_\_\_\_

3

\_\_\_\_\_

## STEP 2: SHARE YOUR NEEDS

Now, share your top three needs with each other! ***“For us to have the healthiest marriage possible, I need...”*** Write them all down in the space above, for future reference!

## STEP 3: PROCESS THE INFO

It may take some time to really understand how to give your spouse what they need, even if they are super direct and clear as day. Use these questions to dig deeper:

- ♥ How can I best meet your needs?
- ♥ Did you learn anything new about your spouse? If so, what?
- ♥ Were there any needs that we had in common?
- ♥ How will you check in with your spouse to see if their needs are being met?



“ But now we want our partner to still give us all these things, but in addition I want you to be my best friend and my trusted confidant and my passionate lover to boot, and we live twice as long. So we come to one person, and we basically are asking them to give us what once an entire village used to provide.

-ESTHER PEREL

HEALTHY PEOPLE CONTINUE RELATIONSHIPS WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY. IT'S REALISTIC FOR YOUR SPOUSE TO MEET NEEDS **NOT** \_\_\_\_\_ **YOUR NEEDS.**

## CONCLUSION

RECOGNIZING THE DIFFERENCES THAT YOU AND YOUR SPOUSE HAVE REGARDING YOUR NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS **ADDS TO THE TAPESTRY OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP.**

### LET'S NOT FORGET:

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MARRIAGE  
**COURSE**

# After “I Do”

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO NEWLYWED LIFE

**MODULE 7**

SMALL STUFF



## MAIN IDEA

SMALL STUFF CAN CREEP INTO MARRIAGE AND CAN LEAD TO CONFLICT, BUT YOU CAN MANAGE THEM.

### WHAT IS THE “SMALL STUFF?”

SMALL STUFF IS \_\_\_\_\_ .

A pet is something you love dearly. It's precious to you. A peeve is something that irritates you in an irrationally upsetting way. So a “pet peeve” is an oxymoron. It's an annoyance that you coddle and nurture.

IT'S YOUR PET PEEVE. YOU CHOOSE HOW FAR TO LET YOUR ANNOYANCE AND FRUSTRATION GROW.



### CHECK YOUR EXPECTATIONS

Who doesn't love personality tests?? AND, with this one, you get to guess your spouse's answer, too (let the competition begin!). You each have one of these pages, so grab your pens and get started! **In Column 1, rank how much you relate to each of these pet peeves on a scale of 1-5** (1 being “Who would get annoyed at that??” and 5 being “Oh my gosh, I'm not alone??”).

THEN, **in Column 2, rate your SPOUSE on a scale of 1-5, too!** Once you're done filling out those two columns, compare your pages. **Write in their answers to each of the pet peeves in Column 3, and finally, write the difference between what you thought your spouse would be and what they actually are in Column 4.** Tally up your total, then flip this page over to see what it means! (**HINT:** the lower the number, the better!)

## THE TEST:

1	2	3	4	
___	___	___	___	1. Leaving dishes in the sink
___	___	___	___	2. People talking with their mouths full
___	___	___	___	3. Slow drivers
___	___	___	___	4. Excessive use of the word “moist”
___	___	___	___	5. When the toilet seat is left up
___	___	___	___	6. When someone leaves the fridge open for too long
___	___	___	___	7. People interrupting when you’re speaking
___	___	___	___	8. Making a slurping sound with a straw
___	___	___	___	9. Smacking gum or chewing food too loudly
___	___	___	___	10. Tapping, fidgeting, clicking pens, bouncing knees, etc.
___	___	___	___	11. People talking during a movie
___	___	___	___	12. People staring at their phone/screen even if you’re talking to them
___	___	___	___	13. Being “accidentally” woken up
___	___	___	___	14. When people have no sense of a personal bubble
___	___	___	___	15. When someone doesn’t use turn signals
___	___	___	___	16. Being late
___	___	___	___	17. People not covering their mouths when they cough
___	___	___	___	18. Someone eating food off your plate without asking
___	___	___	___	19. When someone changes the song in the car AS they’re asking if they can
___	___	___	___	20. Hair. Everywhere. (the shower wall, the couch, the floor, the drain, etc.)
TOTAL: ___				

**So how’d you do?** If you scored between 0-24, do a little celebration dance, because you’ve got a really good idea of who your spouse really is! If you scored between 25-49, make sure to keep being aware of your spouse, their moods, and their patterns. It’s a great way to keep getting to know them and understand the things that drive them nuts! If you scored between 50-74, you might have a long way to go before you totally understand your spouse, but that just means there’s room to keep growing together. And if you scored between 75-100, you might want to be a little more intentional about focusing on the reality your spouse lives in moving forward.

***And speaking of moving forward...***

# PET PEEVES VS. REAL DEALS

## PET PEEVES:

- Dirty dishes in the sink
- Hair on the shower wall
- Dirty clothes on the floor
- Makeup stacked on the bathroom counter
- Not agreeing on where to go for dinner
- What should be done (or not done) on a Saturday

## REAL DEALS:

- Cancelling a date night last minute to hang out with friends
- Spending waaay outside of your limits/boundaries with money
- Your spouse is never in the mood
- Chores falling on one person's plate
- Bad mouthing friends or family
- Bad mouthing each other to friends or family

FOR MORE ON THESE **REAL DEALS**, CHECK OUT THE CONFLICT MODULE.



## WHY ARE YOU THE WAY YOU ARE?

THE MAJORITY OF SMALL ISSUES IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP CAN BE SMOOTHED OVER WITH ONE OF 2 "F" WORDS: \_\_\_\_\_ OR \_\_\_\_\_ .

**Fixing the problem.** Your spouse isn't deficient because they're different. You're fixing the issue, not each other.

**Forgetting the story.** You need to forget the story you made up about the situation. This allows you to move forward with your spouse and see them in a positive light.

BOTH REQUIRE AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE ISSUE **AND A BOLDNESS TO SOLVE THAT ISSUE.**

# SIGNS YOU'RE LETTING IT GO TOO FAR

Let's talk popcorn for a sec. It starts off this small, harmless kernel. But when it gets too hot, it totally explodes. The small stuff in your marriage can explode and burn you both if you let it sit in the heat for too long. Here are a few ways you can tell if the small stuff is about to explode and how to keep it from happening:

- ♥ **You have a “running list.”** What to do: Acknowledge that you have a list and think through each item as a sole instance.
- ♥ **You start saying “always” or “never.”** What to do: Set a rule in your marriage that “always” and “never” are not allowed to be used when describing negative things about your spouse, whether in your mind or in conversation.
- ♥ **You avoid your spouse.** What to do: As much as you may not want to, talk it out. If things have gotten too heated and tension is too high, seek the help of a certified counselor or therapist to mediate the conversation.



## DID YOU KNOW?

There's a scientific way to evaluate your relationship to see just how “happy” you are! A study conducted by The Gottman Institute found that the happiest couples had 5 positive interactions with each other for every 1 negative interaction.

To break it down... For each instance of a raised voice, complaint or outburst, there were 5 instances of good listening, validation, affirmation, physical affection, compliments, using soft words, etc. How does your marriage compare? When you think about every interaction, do the positives outweigh the negatives 5 to 1?





MARRIAGE  
**COURSE**

# After “I Do”

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO NEWLYWED LIFE

**MODULE 8**

CONFLICT





THE TOPIC OF THIS TOOLKIT MODULE DOES NOT REFER TO ANY KIND OF ABUSIVE BEHAVIORS. IF YOU THINK YOU ARE A VICTIM OF MARITAL ABUSE, IMMEDIATELY SEEK HELP FROM A LOCAL AGENCY OR CALL THE NATIONAL DOMESTIC ABUSE HOTLINE AT 1.800.799.7233.

## MAIN IDEA

UNDERSTAND HOW TO ENGAGE IN HEALTHY CONFLICT AND DECIDE YOUR RULES TO FIGHT RIGHT.

As newlyweds, there's a chance you haven't reached the point where you're squabbling over lots of things. Or, maybe you have. And, of course, there are bigger issues couples fight over than the TV or socks. Common topics couples have conflicts over are chores, money, sex and intimacy, other family members like in-laws, and (believe it or not) how to spend leisure time.

Conflict can be a problem in marriage. But it doesn't have to be. And that's why you're in this handout right now!



## LET'S PICK A FIGHT!

YOU WILL NEED 1 DECK OF CARDS AND 2 STRAWS OR ROLLED UP PAPER.

Set the deck of cards between you on a table. Each of you should have a straw or paper roll. When we say "Go," blow through your straw/paper roll at the deck of cards, forcing as many cards as you can onto your spouse's side of the table. Whoever blows the most cards to the other side is the winner. We're going to give you 30 seconds.

1

# HOW DOES CONFLICT HAPPEN?

YOU ARE TWO DIFFERENT PEOPLE.

There are two main factors that influence how you see conflict in your marriage. They are how you were raised and what you observed as a child and in past relationships. Whether or not these had a positive or negative impact on your view of conflict, it needs to be talked about! So let's do that now. Talk through the questions below!

- ♥ *What's been your experience with conflict in the past?*
- ♥ *What did you experience growing up?*
- ♥ *What did you experience in other relationships, romantic or otherwise?*

SEE CONFLICT AS A \_\_\_\_\_ IN YOUR  
MARRIAGE, NOT AS A \_\_\_\_\_ OF YOUR  
MARRIAGE.



## HOW CAN CONFLICT BE HEALTHY?

When good conflict is present in a relationship, it can help build trust, identify any places you need to adjust or establish boundaries, help you find solutions to problems, and ultimately make you better at resolving conflict! **In other words, practicing healthy conflict makes you better at having healthy conflict.** But what does that look like for your marriage?

### HEALTHY CONFLICT:

- Is solution-oriented
- Determines whether this is a problem to be solved or a tension to be managed
- Asks, what are our underlying concerns with this issue?
- Takes a time out if needed
- Creates space for each person to be heard and their voice validated
- Keeps the tone calm
- Each person takes responsibility for their own stuff, expresses regret, and asks for forgiveness

## UNHEALTHY CONFLICT:

- Escalating behavior: yelling, shouting  
throwing things
- Avoiding conflict: acting as if the  
disagreement is not there
- Keeping score and bringing up old  
issues
- Intimidation, manipulation, and threats
- Saying words like “never” and “always”
- Interruptions
- Name calling, sarcasm, or cussing

## SKILLS FOR HEALTHY CONFLICT: (DESCRIBED IN VIDEO)

- Stop, Look, Listen
- Weigh the issue
- Remember, what’s not a big deal for you  
may be a big deal for your spouse
- Keep it about the problem, not the  
person
- Give space for both of you to express  
yourselves and be heard
- Determine your Rules to Fight Right  
(check it out below!)



## OUR RULES TO FIGHT NICE

**Every fight needs some ground rules.** And this list of rules to fight nice are just that! Take a minute now and talk about what you will and will not allow during a conflict. Things like no cursing, name-calling, or using words like “always” or “never” are a great place to get started!



1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_



MARRIAGE  
**COURSE**

# After “I Do”

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO NEWLYWED LIFE

**MODULE 9**

BOUNDARIES



## MAIN IDEA

SET UP GUARDRAILS TO PROTECT YOUR MARRIAGE AND UNDERSTAND THE NEED FOR THEM.

## THE WHAT AND WHY OF BOUNDARIES

Boundaries are like a Jenga tower. When the edge pieces are in place, the structure is sturdy. But when outside influences start taking away those edges, the whole thing could collapse!

HEALTHY BOUNDARIES ARE THE SECRET TO HEALTHY, THRIVING RELATIONSHIPS. THEY BRING \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, AND \_\_\_\_\_.

*“Marriage is not slavery. It is based on a love deeply rooted in freedom. Each partner is free from the other and therefore free to love the other.*

*Where there is control, or perception of control, there is not love. Love only exists where there is freedom.”*

- HENRY CLOUD



## HOW TO SET BOUNDARIES

### SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media can easily become a sounding board when issues arise in our relationships, but you should be doing the most work on your marriage **in** your marriage.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

- How will you respond if an old flame contacts you?
- Is there anything you're uncomfortable with me posting on social?
- Are there any people I currently follow that make you uncomfortable?
- Take turns finishing this statement: "It makes me uncomfortable when you \_\_\_\_\_ on social media."
- Take turns finishing this statement: "I will represent our marriage well on social media by \_\_\_\_\_."

## TECHNOLOGY

Technology is a central part of most of our lives, between our work, personal, and social life. But it can easily become a barrier between you and your spouse. Setting boundaries with technology can help prevent problems and encourage connection.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What are "tech-free" times for us? (date nights, in bed, at dinner, etc.)
- What are your expectations for technology use in our home? (Gaming, FaceTime with friends, having the TV on, etc.)
- Do we have an open phone policy?

## IN-LAWS

You know the dynamics of your family and how to best set up boundaries, so don't make your spouse responsible for the relationship between you and your parents. You own the relationship with your parents. Your spouse is your #1 priority.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

- How would you feel if my parents stopped by unannounced?
- How often do your parents expect us to see them in person? Call on the phone?
- Will your parents expect me to invite them to birthday parties I plan for you?
- Does your family highly prioritize the day of the holiday? Or just that the holiday is celebrated?
- What kind of conversations are off-limits with my parents? (Issues in our marriage, finances, etc.)
- How can we start setting realistic expectations now for this year's holidays?

## TECHNOLOGY

If your spouse is uncomfortable with a friend, your spouse should always be a higher priority. That being said, setting strong boundaries around friendships can help you both feel more comfortable and prevent arguments and hurt feelings down the road.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Would you be okay if I got coffee with a co-worker of the opposite-sex?
- Are there any of my current friends that you're not comfortable with?
- What are things you want to know if I were to go out with friends? (Who, where, for how long, etc.)
- How many times a week/month are you okay with me going out with friends?
- If I were to meet a new friend, how soon would you expect to be introduced to them?
- Do you think we need to make hanging out with other married couples a higher priority?

*"No one should come between you and your spouse. They should come alongside you, but not between you." - ASHLEY MCILWAIN*





MARRIAGE  
COURSE

After “I Do”  
THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO NEWLYWED LIFE

MODULE 10

PLAY



## MAIN IDEA

THE PRESENCE OF PLAY HELPS YOUR  
CONNECTEDNESS AND INTIMACY GROW.  
YOU CAN KEEP IT GOING IN YOUR  
MARRIAGE!

## IT ALL **STARTS WITH PLAY**

Think about it... Every close friendship happens because of fun things you do together! Your spouse should be your best friend - the foundation (and continuation) of play has to be there. In fact, we're sure one of the main reasons you're married to your spouse in the first place is because you have fun with them!



## WHY **PLAY MATTERS**

Making play a priority in your marriage will actually increase your intimacy, too! There are 6 different types, or pillars, of intimacy. When one grows, they all are more likely to grow, too. So when your experiential intimacy is strong, you'll feel more intimate all around!

PHYSICAL

EMOTIONAL

INTELLECTUAL

CREATIVE

EXPERIENTIAL

SPIRITUAL

## 6 PILLARS OF INTIMACY

## AND COUPLES WHO PLAY TOGETHER...

- Grow closer to each other,
- Experience more positive emotions toward each other and their relationship,
- And as a result are happier and want to stay together!

\_\_\_\_\_ CAUSES A CHEMICAL RELEASE OF DOPAMINE IN THE BRAIN, WHICH SERVES AS A REWARD FOR THE BRAIN, CREATES A SENSE OF EUPHORIA, AND HELPS MOTIVATE A PERSON TO CONTINUE THE BEHAVIOR.



## COMMITTING TO PLAY

Right now, play still probably comes pretty easy to you and your spouse. But further on in your marriage, that might not be the case. You may both have responsibilities like careers, raising children, household chores, and community commitments. But when you choose to make play a habit in your marriage now, it will come easier then, too!

PLAY ISN'T A LUXURY. IT'S LITERALLY RE-CREATING THE BOND THAT HOLDS YOUR MARRIAGE TOGETHER!

### 4 THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

- ♥ Play doesn't have to be just for \_\_\_\_\_ .
- ♥ Play doesn't need to be extravagant or \_\_\_\_\_ .
- ♥ Play has to be \_\_\_\_\_ .
- ♥ Some types of play should be reserved for your \_\_\_\_\_ .

# NOW IT'S UP TO YOU!

Spend the next few minutes coming up with 5 playful things you want to do and 5 playful things you know your spouse would enjoy. (Don't show your spouse yet!)

## **SPOUSE 1:**

### 5 THINGS FOR YOU:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

### 5 THINGS FOR YOUR LOVE:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

## **SPOUSE 2:**

### 5 THINGS FOR YOU:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

### 5 THINGS FOR YOUR LOVE:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

When you're both finished, compare lists. Are there mutual activities? Did your spouse do a good job knowing what kind of play you'd enjoy? Are there any themes you see with the activities you both chose? (All at home, all outdoors, all good date nights, etc.)

Here's a challenge for you... Pull out your calendar (digital or physical). Using the lists you just made, choose 4 days/nights in the next month (preferably 1/week) and schedule something fun! Do your best to keep that habit going for as long as you can!

**NO... REALLY... GET YOUR CALENDAR OUT!**

# WHAT'S IN THE BOWL?

Sometimes, the creative juices are just not flowing. And that's okay! Here's one great way you and your spouse can play, laugh, and enjoy each other's company - for free and at home! **What's In The Bowl** is a classic, hysterical game for people of all ages. It requires minimal preparation and supplies, and you and your spouse will have a blast doing it for a date night!

## SUPPLIES

- A bowl
- Headphones or earplugs (optional)
- A blindfold
- Random household items

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Play a game of Rock, Paper, Scissors to decide who has to be blindfolded first.
2. Whoever loses, put on the blindfold! For an extra challenge, put on headphones and listen to loud music or put in earplugs.
3. Whoever won Rock, Paper, Scissors, you now get to choose something (or some things) to put in the bowl. Here are some examples to get the creativity goin':
  - *Shaving cream and dried beans*
  - *Mushed banana*
  - *Aluminum foil covered in petroleum jelly*
  - *You get the idea...*
4. After the winner has their item(s) selected, place them in the bowl.
5. The blindfolded person then has to guess what's in the bowl!
6. Once they guess correctly (or give up), switch roles.
7. Go for a total of three rounds, so that each person guesses/chooses 3 times.





MARRIAGE  
**COURSE**

After “I Do”  
THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO NEWLYWED LIFE

**MODULE 11**

FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND US





## MAIN IDEA

OUTSIDE RELATIONSHIPS INFLUENCE YOUR MARRIAGE. IT'S IMPORTANT TO SET BOUNDARIES TO PROTECT YOUR RELATIONSHIP.

## RELATIONSHIPS HAVE **SEASONS**

Your marriage is the one friendship and ultimate relationship that should come first. It's very important to wean off (or at least back away from) relationships that could potentially cause problems in your marriage.



## ADDRESSING **CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS**

RECOGNIZE THAT WHO WE ARE IS INFLUENCED BY OUR \_\_\_\_\_ AND \_\_\_\_\_ .

SET SOME GROUND RULES FOR \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ WITH PARENTS AND FRIENDS.

SET SOME GROUND RULES FOR WHAT YOU TALK ABOUT WITH OTHERS.

# RED FLAGS AND GREEN FLAGS

## RED FLAGS TO WATCH OUT FOR

- You feel pressured to do things that are against your personal values.
- You're a totally different person when you are around them & everyone knows it.
- None of your other friends like them... and your spouse can't stand them.
- You lose sight of your dreams and pass on scoring your life goals when you're around them.

## IF YOU SEE A RED FLAG...

- If you feel pressure from friends or family, talk to your spouse and come up with a plan together to address.
- Being around someone else shouldn't change who you are. If you don't recognize this in yourself, ask your spouse to help you see it in a loving way.
- It may be time to remove some toxic people from your life.
- If someone is downplaying your dreams or passions, they may not have your best interest at heart.

## GREEN FLAGS TO SEEK OUT

- They just get you and your spouse. They have personal experience that is similar to yours.
- They're always supportive of you and eager to offer a helping hand.
- They have an objective view of your marriage. They aren't rooting for one specific person, but for your relationship as a whole.
- They express the same values as you, and their life is headed in a positive, healthy direction.



MARRIAGE  
COURSE

# After “I Do”

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO NEWLYWED LIFE

MODULE 12

TRADITIONS



## MAIN IDEA

YOU ARE A FAMILY UNIT WHO CAN  
CREATE NEW TRADITIONS OR JOIN IN  
PASSING DOWN TRADITIONS.

## YOU ARE A FAMILY.

Even if you haven't realized it yet, you and your spouse have been your own family from the moment you got married! Not only have you established yourselves separately from your parents, but you've also created your own ways of doing things, whether intentionally or not.



## TRADITIONS

TRADITIONS HELP CREATE YOUR FAMILY'S \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ AND \_\_\_\_\_ .

They're a huge part of creating a family! There's a sense of belonging and comfort that you get from your family traditions. Not only do they provide a sense of family history, but they can also help build strong family connections.

Traditions help pass along cultural and family values from generation to generation. So let's talk about your family traditions, and the traditions you want to pass on!

# MY FAMILY, YOUR FAMILY

In the spaces below, write down family traditions from both spouses sides of the family.

## HOLIDAYS

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## BIRTHDAYS

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## MEALTIMES

---

---

---

## BEDTIMES

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---

---

## FAMILY VACATIONS

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# OUR FAMILY

When it comes to establishing your own traditions and defining yourselves as a family, there are three main things to keep in mind. **Communicate (listen and ask questions), remember that you are a team, and offer options, flexibility and grace.**

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ♥ *What are some traditions you have now that you would like to keep?*
- ♥ *What new traditions have you already created since you got married?*
- ♥ *Does anything make you hesitant about making new traditions? What?*
- ♥ *Are there any traditions you want to let go?*
- ♥ *Why is it hard to let go of traditions?*
- ♥ *What traditions are you looking forward to keeping in your family?*



## DEVELOP A FAMILY MISSION STATEMENT

When you define a “Family Mission Statement,” it can help you make decisions, evaluate and improve your family, and stay on track as a family. It doesn’t have to be complicated or complex, but it should reflect you and your spouse’s intentions as you move forward as a family. Use the start of the sentence below to get you going!

**THE MISSION OF OUR FAMILY IS TO...**

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CONCLUSION

BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT CONNECTING.

Without a foundation of connection, your marriage will feel dull, off, and just plain not as fun as it could be! But when you intentionally take time to love on, connect with, and support your spouse, so many other things will come easier in your marriage. **For a more in-depth look at specific ways to connect, check out the Date Night, Communication, Conflict, and Intimacy lessons!**

LET'S NOT FORGET:

Horizontal lines for writing notes.