

Couples Relationship Investment Weekend

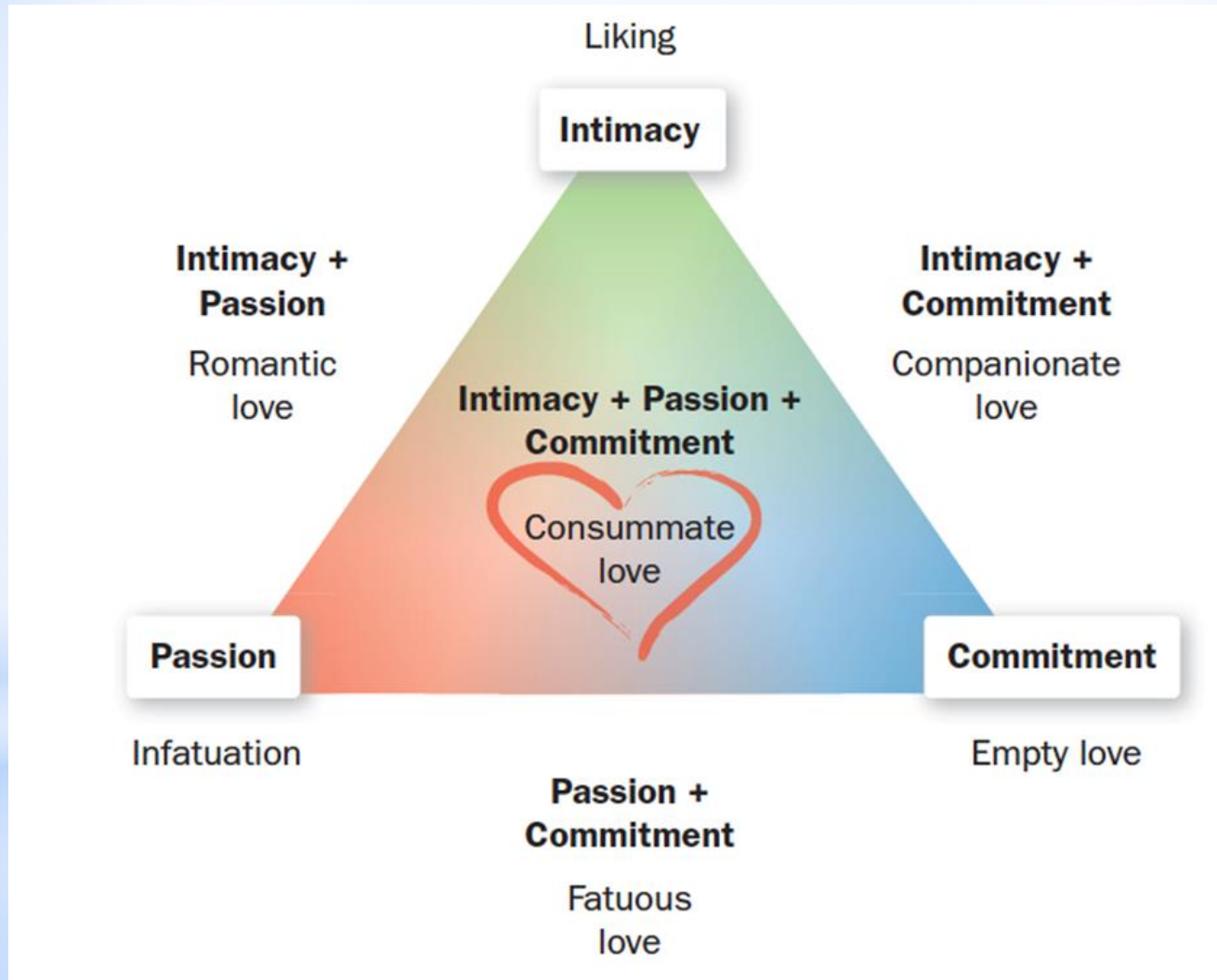


Chris Giles, MS, LMFT
Jennifer Giles, MS, LPC

Christian Family Institute
ChristianFamilyInstitute.com
918-745-0095

Making *good* marriages
GREAT!

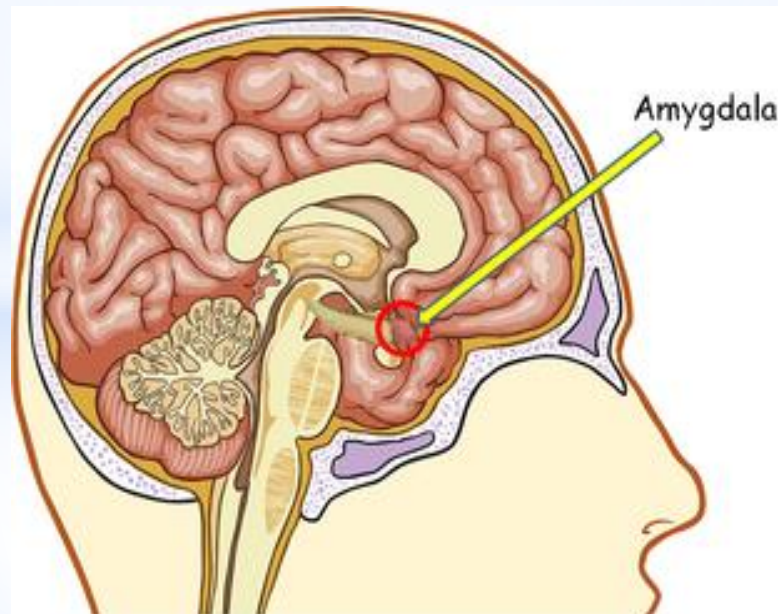
What kind of relationship do you want?



Science Behind Relationships

John Gottman and the “Love Lab”

- Gottman grouped couples into two categories: “Masters” & “Disasters”
- “Disasters” were in a state of “Fight or Flight” when discussing their relationship



3 Characteristics of Master Relationships

1. Kindness

- Speak to your spouse like you would speak to a complete stranger.
- Kindness can calm or even disable the fear response.
- Kindness is like a muscle – it can be developed.
- Even anger can be best expressed with kindness.

3 Characteristics of Master Relationships

Ways to express Kindness:

- Look for things to appreciate about your spouse and communicate your gratitude
- “Bids” for Emotional Connection: Choose to turn toward your spouse

3 Characteristics of Master Relationships

Exercise: Bids for Connection

- Share with one another 2-3 ways that you make bids for connection toward your partner (physical, emotional, relational)

3 Characteristics of Master Relationships

2. Generosity

- Most spouses are trying to do the right thing even if it is poorly executed (or perceived as poorly executed)
- Show your spouse love in the way that they desire
- Recognize and receive the love that your spouse shows, even if it is not the way you desire or the way you would have done it

(We recommend reading Gary Chapman's book: The Five Love Languages)

3 Characteristics of Master Relationships

Exercise: 10 Loving Actions

List 10 actions that your spouse engages in or *could* engage in to show you love.

Examples:

- When you _____ I feel loved.
- If you would _____ I would feel loved.

3 Characteristics of Master Relationships

3. Fun

- Creates positive memories
- Increases friendship and intimacy through shared experiences
- Lightens the mood during times of disagreement
- Reduces stress and boosts immune system

3 Characteristics of Master Relationships

Exercise: Group Brainstorm Date Ideas

Rules of Brainstorming:

All ideas are valid. Do not judge or criticize any idea during brainstorming. Create as many ideas as possible. Even silly or impossible ideas could lead to creative options.

- Free activities at home
- Free activities away from home
- Hobbies to engage in together
- Things you used to love to do as a couple
- Dates that require advance planning
- Dates that require financial expense

Passion and Sexuality

Passion and Sexuality

- Sexuality represents our most vulnerable self
- Couples who talk openly about “tough” topics are much more likely to be satisfied in their relationship
- Sexuality is more than sexual intercourse
- Men and women may view sexuality differently, but they desire the same thing (Connection)

Passion and Sexuality

Benefits of Healthy Sexuality

- Sexuality/Intercourse promotes closeness in the relationship
- Stress relief- with the release of oxytocin and other “good stuff”
- Increases Self-esteem
- Increases Couple-esteem
- It's Fun!

Passion and Sexuality

Issues That Can Negatively Effect Sexuality

- Energy spent elsewhere
 - Pornography
 - Video games
 - Social media
- Children
- Mental health issues
- Hormone levels
- Medical issues
- Poor time management & lack of self care
- Stressful life events

Passion and Sexuality

Addressing Issues

- Remember – Your spouse is not a mind reader...and neither are you
- Listen without judgement
- Use a strengths based or positive approach:
 - “I really like it when...”
 - “Let’s try...”
 - “I would like...’
- Discuss the topic outside of bed
- Be “Romantic” – Guys, don’t freak out
- Physical intimacy is not all about intercourse
- Schedule it
- Go away
- Mix it up

Passion and Sexuality

Exercise:

Complete the
“Staying Connected Sex Questionnaire”

Building The Marriage You Want

Benefits of a Healthy Marriage

- Better mental health
- Better physical health
- Better work performance
- Fewer financial problems
- Overall happier in life
- Children tend to fair better with friends, in school, and be more emotionally healthy

Communication

Communication

- **Communication**= A message being sent and received
- **Miscommunication** = the message sent is not the message that is received

Intention and Impact

Communication Pitfalls

ESCALATION

Responding back and forth negatively with each other



INVALIDATION

Putting down the thoughts, opinions or character of the other



NEGATIVE INTERPRETATION

Making a negative and unfair assumption about what your partner was thinking



WITHDRAWAL

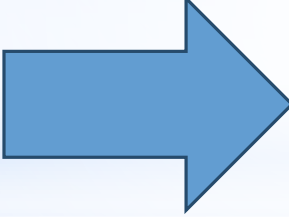
Unwillingness to get into or stay with important discussions



Communication Pitfalls

People usually handle conflict in one of two ways:

Swallow Anger  Withdrawal
Negative Interpretation

Spew Anger  Invalidation
Escalation
Negative Interpretation

Communication

Avoiding Communication Pitfalls

- James 1:19
 - “My brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be Quick to listen + Slow to speak = and Slow to become angry.” (*equation symbols added*)
- Active Listening Skills
 - “Drive-through” method

Speaker Listener Technique

Rules for the Speaker

- Speak for yourself, don't mindread!
- Keep statements brief. Don't go on and on.
- Stop to let the listener paraphrase.

Rules for the Listener

- Paraphrase what you hear.
- Focus on the speaker's message. Don't rebut.

Rules for Both

- The speaker has the floor.
- Speaker keeps the floor while the listener paraphrases.
- Share the floor.

To order Fighting for Your Marriage books, audio, or video tapes:

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Exercise: Active Listening

Using the Speaker Listener Technique, **ACTIVELY LISTEN** to one thing your partner is excited about. Then, switch.

Harsh vs Soft Start Ups

- Harsh start ups trigger fear reactions and lead to communication pitfalls (*escalation, invalidation, negative interpretation and withdrawal*)
- Gottman's research shows that most arguments end on the same note that they began.
- 96% of the time, we can accurately predict the fate of a conflict discussion within the first 3 minutes.

Harsh vs Soft Start Ups

Avoid these tactics:

- **MIND READING** is disrespectful. Indicates that you think you know what your partner thinks, feels or intends to say.
- **NAME CALLING** is critical and demeaning. Elicits defensiveness. Implies that things can't change.
- **YOU ALWAYS** or **YOU NEVER** is an overgeneralization. Communicates no hope.
- **BLAMING** indicates that the problem is all your partner's fault. In reality, all problems are relationship problems.

Harsh vs Soft Start Ups

- Soft start ups set the tone for effective conflict discussions
 - Complain, don't blame
 - Use "I" statements
 - Describe what you see happening, don't criticize or judge
 - State wishes clearly and directly
 - Be polite (use "please" and "I would appreciate...")
 - Express appreciation about past times when you experienced what you're looking for now
 - Address concerns quickly while you have emotional control – don't allow your anger to escalate until you explode

Harsh vs Soft Start Ups

- We often tell those that we love more about what we *don't* like than what we *do* like
- Ignoring the positive is not good
- Ignoring concerns is not good
- We need to make a conscious effort to speak openly about the positives and concerns

Harsh vs Soft Start Ups

Raising Concerns

- People need to know that their needs, wants and desires matter
- Most people don't enjoy hearing something negative about themselves
- We need to express our concerns in a gentle, respectful and specific way

Dealing with Conflict

Resolve Conflict like a Master

All Couples WILL have conflict.

All couples have differences and disagreements. Studies show the amount of disagreements are not related to marital happiness as much as how they are handled. Happy couples do not avoid disagreements; they resolve them while remaining respectful of each other, thereby strengthening their relationship.

Resolve Conflict like a Master

10 Steps to Resolving Conflict

1. Set a time and place for discussion.
2. Define the problem-**Be Specific**.
3. List the ways you each contribute to the problem.
4. List past attempts to resolve the issue that were not successful.
5. Brainstorm-try to list 10 possible solutions to the problem. Do not criticize any suggestions at this point.

Resolve Conflict like a Master

10 Steps to Resolving Conflict

6. Discuss and evaluate each of these possible solutions. Be as objective as possible.
7. Agree on one solution to try.
8. Agree how you will each work toward the chosen solution – Be specific.
9. Set up another meeting to discuss your progress.
10. Reward each other for progress.

What Kind of Relationship Do YOU Want?

Amos 3:3

**Can two people walk together
without agreeing on the direction?**

RESOURCES

Article: Science Says Lasting Relationships Come Down To 2 Basic Traits
by EMILY ESFAHANI SMITH <http://www.businessinsider.com/lasting-relationships-rely-on-2-traits-2014-11>

Book: The Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman

Book: A Lasting Promise by Scott Stanley

Article: <http://www.yourtango.com/experts/mary-jo-rapini/pillow-talk-feeling-comfortable-talking-sex-your-partner>

Iphone Apps: <http://www.gottman.com/iphone-apps-2/>

Pinterest has excellent ideas for creating a date night jar and other fun activities.

The therapists at Christian Family Institute would love to help as you journey toward making your marriage great!

www.christianfamilyinstitute.com