

ON THE ROAD TO EACH OTHER

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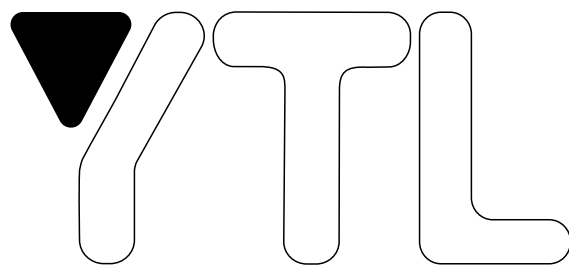
INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS



YOUTH AT THE THRESHOLD OF LIFE

TEACHER'S MANUAL

2021



YOUTH AT THE THRESHOLD OF LIFE

A program to instill self-esteem,
relationship building and character development

INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

On the Road to Each Other

Teacher's Manual **Volume 2**

Written by:
Gábor Grész and David M. Robinson

<http://ytl.academy/>

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The following people contributed to this YTL Teacher's Manual:

Members of the YTL editorial board: Gábor Grész, David M. Robinson, Béla Kenessey, Izabella Zs. Nagy, Éva Mergl, Edina Grész, Carol LaGue, Angela Ellett, and the members of Crossroads, the working group of YTL's international division.

The Crossroads lesson plans were prepared by:

Dr. Marcia Ball, former associate professor at the Department of Health Sciences at James Madison University
- <https://www.twr360.org/speakers/view/id,134>

Beverly Byers, consultant

Dr. Jennie Cerullo, professor at Department of Education and Behavioral Studies at Azusa Pacific University

Rex E. Johnson, professor emeritus at Talbot School of Theology - <https://www.biola.edu/directory/people/rex-johnson>

Dr. Alan Scholes, professor at the Department of Theology at the International School of Theology

Dr. Gary Stanley, professor at the Faculty of Communications at the International School of Theology

Contributing writers and editors:

Erin Balance, editor, International School Project

Rebecca S. Cotton, editor-in-chief, Women Today International, CCC

Christina Creutz, writer, Worldwide Challenge Magazine

Steven Grezlak, writer and editor, Worldwide Challenge Magazine

William Horlacher, editor-in-chief, writer, Director of Bridges International

Richard Morris, writer, Cross-Cultural Leadership Training

Kirsten Wilson, writer

Mary Ann Thurmond, partner, 35 years with leadership management firm

Jean Saunders, edited approximately 25 books for Dr. Jack P. Lewis, Memphis, TN

Reviewers:

Gábor Grész, co-founder and leader of the YTL program

David M. Robinson, co-founder of the YTL program

Dr. Dénes Bánhegyi, former national AIDS coordinator

Dick Day, professor at the Faculty of Human Ecology and Family Studies at the University of Malawi

Dr. Delanyo Adadevoh, PhD, William Beauvis

Moirá Chimombo, professor of Curriculum and Learning at the University of Malawi

Charlotte Day, member of the Faculty of Human Ecology and Family Studies at the University of Malawi

John Harris, president of Summer Night Communications

Daniel LaGue, former regional coordinator of YTL

Diana Langerock, South and East Africa Coordinator of YTL

Translated into English by: Gabriella Nagy, Edina Grész, Carol LaGue

Cover design and page layout: Renátó Grész

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Managing editor: Gábor Grész

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“Men have no more time to understand anything. They buy things all ready made at the shops. But there is no shop anywhere where one can buy friendship, and so men have no friends any more.”

The Fox—from *The Little Prince*
by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

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Preface

“The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles, but to irrigate deserts”—C. S. Lewis writes in his truly remarkable book, *The Abolition of Man*¹. Since its launch in 1994, ***Youth at the Threshold of Life (YTL)*** has been trying to fulfill this mission to irrigate the drought of self-esteem and the relational, emotional and spiritual desert that surrounds children. This wilderness causes their souls, emotions and relationships to suffer from drought. This forces them to seek after tiny drops of water instead of the emotional, relational oasis available for their souls. These three volumes of the YTL Teacher’s Manual are here to help point children from the wilderness to many well-being resources. They are now thoroughly revised and combine the experience of over two and a half decades.

Over the 25 years of the ***Youth at the Threshold of Life (YTL)*** program at least six generations have graduated from high school. Tens of thousands of Hungarian students took part in the ‘YTL classes’ all over the country. Globally, hundreds of thousands graduated from this program as well.

The accumulated experience clearly shows that those needs that prompted the birth of this program in the first place are still present and they increasingly apply to young people today. The situation of families hasn’t become better, relationships haven’t become more stable, and the values that determine a balanced life (love, selflessness, self-sacrifice, respect, honor, honesty, etc.) are less and less present. The lack of values that characterized Hungary after the democratic transition in 1989 was quickly replaced by a very powerful and loud value system. This value system is very clearly showing its true colors—for many people, everything can be sacrificed on the altar of consumption, career and money over their relationships and families. Now there is no longer a vacuum, as family values (relationships, family, love, friendship and children) have been replaced by self-satisfying pursuits (success, money, career, sex without love, etc.).

Our task is even more difficult and important now than when the YTL program was first launched. We must stand for these values as a signpost and even toil for them ceaselessly “like a voice in the wilderness,” since individuals and society as a whole are headed for destruction without them. The devastating signs of this erosion of values are already tangible in the lives of families and children. The evidence is depressing; the institutions of marriage and family are being questioned. Divorce and violence are on the increase, as well. This erosion of values starts affecting every society.

Even if the situation seems to be hopeless at times, it is still possible to achieve thorough and lasting changes in the way young people live and think of their lives. Here are some encouraging examples:

- Sexual activity among high school age students in the US—even if not dramatically, but slowly and steadily—has decreased since 1991. Drug use in the same age group increased until 2001-2003; however, it has greatly reduced since then. There is a similar trend when it comes to alcohol consumption and smoking.
- In Uganda, which became one of the countries most severely affected by AIDS in the late 1980s, HIV prevalence was reduced by a third by 2000. The radical turn can be clearly attributed to

¹New York: Macmillan, 1965

the campaign targeting marital fidelity, abstinence and having less sexual partners. There are similar experiences in Senegal, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic.

- When it comes to Hungary, the effect of the YTL program on youth is very difficult to quantify. Due to our limited resources we haven't been able to carry out a scientific survey, but it would be extremely beneficial if a professional organization would do so. However, our own questionnaires—far from being scientific—show a positive reception and impact among the students. Prior to participating at our lecture series, only 5% of the students thought that it's worth waiting to become sexually active at a later age. By the end of the series, this figure increased to 60%, and 25% of the students expressed their desire to truly wait. Similarly, 60% of the students indicated after our drug prevention lectures that they will refrain from experimenting with drugs.

However, to continue to see increasing good results, we must implement up-to-date tools. The YTL program seeks to help educators, parents and youth workers with old and new tools. As problems and challenges facing youth, work and family education are on the increase, we want to share our useful tools with those who can benefit from using them.

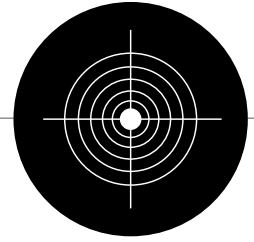
There is a huge task before us all. YTL helps us carry out the most important and valuable task for the future of mankind—namely, to shape the future through the children entrusted to our care.

Sincerely,

Gábor Grész, co-founder and leader

David M. Robinson, co-founder

Members of the YTL team



Why YTL?

Youth at the Threshold of Life (YTL) educational program and movement exists to help young people become healthy adults, gain a more meaningful complete life, and through this to contribute to a more livable society.

A ‘healthy adult’ means—beyond the obvious physical and biological health—that the following three characteristics are present in the life of a person to have a meaningful, complete and whole life:

1. **AUTHENTIC SELF-ESTEEM**—Are able to see themselves realistically; their self-observation is based on stable

foundations; they see themselves as valuable, but they don't under- or overestimate themselves; have a solid character. Healthy adults are aware of themselves.

2. **INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS**—Are able to establish mutual, equal, vulnerable and lasting relationships with others and receive and give acceptance. Healthy adults are aware of their connection to others.
3. **MOTIVATING GOALS**—Have a goal and task, a purpose in the world they live in. Healthy adults are able to set motivating goals that give meaning, hope and significance, and places them in society through their work and profession. Healthy adults know their role in the world.

These three characteristics of a healthy adult are rooted in the following basic emotional, and spiritual needs we all have and want to experience:

1. **I AM VALUABLE! A SENSE OF WORTH.** It's a basic human need to feel valuable. Our sense of worth prompts us to ask existential questions like *Who are we?* and *Why do we exist?* The most basic question of life is related to defining ourselves. Until you can define yourself and discover your worth and who you are, you will not be able to find your place in an intimate relationship or in society. Since our basic human need is to know who we are, we must first understand our strengths and weaknesses. In order to realistically see your worth, you will also need a strong sense of what is good and bad. Without the ability to differentiate between good and bad, you will not be able to realistically see your strengths and weaknesses, your mistakes and virtues. If someone is not able to see and love themselves for who they are (which is very different from self-worship or self-loathing), they will not be able to love and accept others either.
2. **I BELONG! A SENSE OF SIGNIFICANCE.** 'I belong!' comes with the desire to know whether we matter to anyone. Am I acceptable and lovable? Do I belong to anybody or anywhere? In this universe everything is connected. Life wouldn't be possible without the chemical elements connecting to each other. Without connections there would be no life, not only in the physical, biological and chemical sense, but also in the emotional, spiritual and human dimension. We were created to be connected. We can experience acceptance only through our relationships and love. If someone is incapable of establishing a lasting, vulnerable and intimate relationship, they will not have a sense of belonging.
3. **I AM CAPABLE! A SENSE OF COMPETENCE.** Our need for a sense of competence makes us ask 'Is there any purpose for my existence?' 'Why do I live at all?' 'What is my role in this world?' 'Am I capable of achieving anything?' It is a basic human need to understand why we exist. We must identify our purpose in life that provides a framework for the unrepeatable and unique few decades that we spend here on Earth. Identifying our purpose in life empowers us with the sense that we have an important role to play in this world and we are capable of fulfilling this role. As we discover this purpose—in whatever work or profession—it will motivate us to maximize our abilities and develop our skills. Ultimately, this process will lead to a better, more developed society which solidifies our well-being and existence.

In order for the generation that is entrusted to our care to grow up as healthy adults, we need to help them meet these three needs mentioned above. YTL provides educators and parents with resources in this handbook that are aimed at achieving the following purposes.

OUR PURPOSES

01

AUTHENTIC SELF-ESTEEM

To develop the self-esteem of students by strengthening their self-awareness, building strong foundations on which to base their self-worth, giving them tools to understand and control their emotions (EQ) and developing their character.

In order to have an **authentic self-esteem** we need to have a good amount of self-awareness, we need to be able to **intelligently control our emotions** and we need to have a **solid character**.

- a. **Self-Awareness:** To have the right self-awareness, first we need to see ourselves as unique valuable beings; secondly, we have to realistically understand our strengths and weaknesses; thirdly, we need to accept the fact that both good and bad exist in us. To help our students with self-awareness we need to strengthen the following: their sense of worth, their sense of competence and their acceptance of themselves. If people are unable to accept themselves or they don't know themselves, they will be unable to connect to others or discover their own goals in life.
- b. **Emotional Intelligence (EQ):** Our students need to develop their ability to intelligently control their emotions. They need to be able to understand their own emotions and use them for their own advantages.
- c. **Character:** We have to help develop a solid character in the life of our students. We must teach them the difference between good and bad, useful and harmful. We also need to equip them to be able to choose the good and useful instead of the bad and harmful. It's not only our ability to choose well, but it is our character that determines who we are and how others perceive us. Our character is inseparable from who we are. Character is the ability to distinguish between good and bad and to choose what is good and not what is bad.

The **FIRST VOLUME** of the YTL Teacher's Manual discusses this topic.

02

INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

To help our students grow in their ability to build and maintain mutual, impartial, and lasting friendships and intimate relationships.

This goal can be achieved by:

- a. Showing the significance of accepting and valuing others; we present the importance, hindrances and tools for building life-long **friendships**.
- b. Presenting the beauty of the committed, happy and lasting **love-relationships**, by explaining the place of sex in the mutually faithful, life-long relationship and by introducing the dangers of promiscuity.
- c. Equipping our students with the tools of effective **communication** and conflict-resolution.

The **SECOND VOLUME** of the YTL Educator's handbook discusses this topic.

03

MOTIVATING GOALS

To help our students discover their goals and find their place in society; to be able to identify and take the steps necessary to achieve those goals; and to be able to make the right decisions to avoid potential traps that could hinder them from achieving these goals.

This goal can be achieved by:

- a. Helping our students recognize that they have **a role** to play/a task to accomplish in this world. Helping them realize how to turn these roles into plans to accomplish these goals.
- b. Helping them make the right **decisions** and follow through on those decisions with discipline. For this they will need to be able to distinguish between right and wrong, good and bad, useful and harmful.
- c. Teaching them how to recognize and avoid the **traps** that could hinder them from reaching their goals.

The **THIRD VOLUME** of the YTL Educator's handbook discusses this topic.

SUMMARY TABLE:

BASIC NEEDS that determine becoming a healthy adult:	YTL'S PURPOSES:
1. I AM VALUABLE!	1. AUTHENTIC SELF-ESTEEM [VOL. 1]
2. I BELONG!	2. INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS [VOL. 2]
3. I AM CAPABLE!	3. MOTIVATING GOALS [VOL 3.]

A healthy individual builds healthy relationships and a healthy society.

LEGEND

The icons and signs used in the Educator's handbook mean the following:



BASIC IDEA is a reading or text that explains the foundational philosophical concept or belief of the YTL program.



MISSION is a reading or text that defines the purpose and mission of the YTL program.



READING is a text written for the educator that explains a given topic and provides background information for the processing and deeper understanding of the Lesson Plans.



LESSON PLAN provides a step-by-step, visual and clearly understandable explanation of the given topic.



STUDENT NOTES : At the end of some Lesson Plans there are student notes that can be copied and distributed to the students to facilitate their understanding.



GAMES: At the end of some sections there is a collection of games and tasks that can illustrate and help the processing of a given topic.



FILM SCREENING is a Lesson Plan that includes watching a film together and then discussing it as a group.



APPENDIX: At the end of the YTL manual there are additional readings and a collection of other resources.

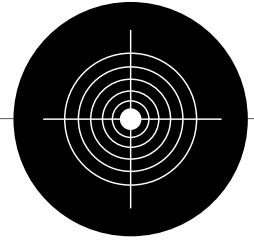


TIME INDICATOR indicates the amount of time required for the processing of the given section in the Lesson Plans.



LESSON HIGHLIGHT shows important truths in the Lesson Plans that must be paid more attention to during the discussions.

INTRODUCTION



Intimate Relationships

The Purpose of this Topic

We want the students to realize that we need each other. People can exist only in human relationships, just like any form of life can exist and evolve only when 'connected.' In relationships you can get hurt and it is in relationships that you can receive healing. A relationship that brings the best out in you is strengthening and you can also see how a bad relationship will bring the worst out in you. This is the reason why we need to learn to establish mutual, intimate and real connections where the partners stand on an equal footing. Such relationships are needed when it comes to friendships and your love life. For the development of intimate relationships—besides accepting yourself—you will need to recognize and learn to accept and

appreciate each other's differences, get to know and respect your own boundaries and the boundaries of the other person. We must also apply the basic principles of the Golden Rule, become familiar with the tools of effective communication and eliminate those 'relationship vampires' who pose a threat to your relationships with other people.

The content of this topic

1. The POWER of FRIENDSHIP—when you want to establish an intimate connection with someone, you must dare to be your real self, know your boundaries, be able to form an attachment, apply the Golden Rule and communicate effectively. People need to be able to develop friendships that last a lifetime and in which they experience acceptance and joy. The strength inherent in such connections gives life and brings out the best in the person.
2. The BEAUTY of LOVE—an important, decisive experience of adolescent years is love. This is the time when you lay the foundations for future relationships. The nature of your first experiences, the relationship habits formed at this time are all imprinted and define your later life. The power that underlies a real, meaningful and happy relationship is patience and commitment. Just like with most valuable things in life, a true companion will also require some waiting on your part.
3. The PAIN of the RELATIONSHIP—in relationships, there is a chance of getting hurt. You get disappointed, you experience conflicts and receive wounds in your relationships with others. You both give and get wounds. Your relationships are defined by your prejudices—brought from your family or acquired later—your presumptions and your conflict resolution skills. Prejudices and conflicts are present in all relationships, but the depth of your relationships will be determined by the way you are capable of resolving them. Without forgiveness, you cannot establish healthy relationships.

The reason why this topic is important

Life does not exist in isolation. All living beings can exist in the universe only by connecting to another living being (or one cell to another). We are mutually dependent on each other. Life requires us to connect with each other. Anything that seeks to exist on its own will perish. Sooner or later every closed system will enter into a state of maximum entropy and this can be changed only from the outside. Our relationships are the external energy sources that recharge us and renew our strength. Without these external connections, people would slowly fall apart, diminish and perish.

It is commonplace and it's true that we live in a society that is immensely atomized. Never before in history have so many people lived so close to each other, had this many tools to be connected (ranging from social media to telephones and the Internet) and know all there is to know about each other. Yet never before did society suffer so badly from loneliness and alienation. This may seem ironic since we are fully equipped with technological inventions that help us build relationships. We have control over the entire planet, but we live tragically isolated lives. It seems that our souls need more than the quantity and abundance provided to us by technology. People have tremendously

expanded their relationship networks by covering the entire world, yet this expansion hasn't resulted in the required or desired depth for real connection.

It seems that the closer we live to each other and the better tools we have on hand to know everything about each other, the shallower and the more superficial our relationships have become.

In this atomized society, in the midst of the pain of shallow and empty connections—resulting from the lack of real, meaningful and intimate relationships—this pain makes its way forward and cries out for some remedy. Everyone seeks to reduce their level of pain. The solution, however, lies in the elimination of the root cause. People seek to reduce pain with the routines they learned or brought from their home environment, as well as society, with superficial relationships, empty conversations, shallow friendships and sexual promiscuity, etc. From one relationship to the other, people are in search of satisfaction, acceptance, security, encouragement and confirmation. Real satisfaction could be ensured by a meaningful, reciprocal and balanced relationship, but such relationships take a lot of hard work to establish and maintain. Precious things do come at a price. This is the reason why it is so essential to be able to establish and develop intimate relationships. Since most students have a damaged background or come from a single-parent family, they will not only lack these learned relationship patterns, but they enter into adulthood already full of wounds, pain and immense needs. As much as possible we have to show them the basic pillars on which meaningful, intimate relationships can be built. We have to teach them what they can actively do for their relationships to be what they really need them to be.



Intimate Relationships Introduction

“It Is Not Good
For Man To Be
Alone...”

Created to be connected

The above quote is found on the second page of the Bible, one of the most ancient books available to humankind. It is rather peculiar that it was recognized in the very beginning, when the world was created that “it is not good for man to be alone...”¹

There are four important facts you learn about man from the first pages of this book that define our society and the ‘image of man’ more than any other book ever written. The ancient wisdom in Genesis makes the following four statements about man:

1. Man bears the image of God; therefore he is valuable and is capable of accomplishing great things.

¹Genesis 2:18.

2. As a creation of God, man is good. This explains the origin of the good in us, just like it gives an explanation for the origin of bad: it appeared when mankind abused their freedom and we consciously separated ourselves from our Creator.
3. Man is responsible for getting to know and for taking care of the created world.
4. Man was created to be in a relationship. Whatever is described in Genesis, you read that is was 'good.' The only thing that was not good in Creation: man was alone and he was lonely.

It's a fantastic recognition at the dawn of humanity that it was not good for man to be alone. Each person is precious and valuable all by themselves. Everyone has abilities and characteristics all by themselves, and has a task to attend to that can be met and fulfilled to some extent, even when alone. One can exist and create value all alone as well. However, it is not good to be alone and be isolated and lonely.

There is an innate need and desire in us to be in a relationship. Being in a relationship is good. Being lonely is not good. It's not only that mankind is more useful, more efficient, and can reach goals and perform tasks more easily when not working alone. When the Creator makes the statement that "it is not good for man to be alone," God (the Creator) doesn't think that mankind alone is insufficient to accomplish goals (which by the way, is also true). However, God considers happiness, well-being, joy, prosperity, cheerfulness, emotional and spiritual health as essential elements, since mankind can only flourish, be healthy, whole and good when not alone.

But like with so many things in this world entrusted to us, we can damage and ruin even our relationships. A relationship is meant for good and to be a blessing that makes you richer and blessed by it, yet most relationships leave people in pain, injured and hurt. Many people become walled off because of the pain they experienced earlier, and instead of enjoying the benefits and the good that can come out of a relationship, they choose loneliness.

It can be concluded that people feel an unquenchable desire to connect with others because it is good for them; they receive intangible benefits and also encouragement and strength to battle through life. People are built from connection and it helps them to experience love and acceptance in the midst of all sorts of failures. The connection with the other person becomes an external source of energy that will recharge your "batteries" and spur you on.

A real connection

As created beings it is normal for us to desire a connection and to be in a relationship. It is absolutely normal that loneliness is painful. It is also good if people seek to break out of their isolation. But what kind of a relationship should you seek?

Your "Self" wants to be revealed as its true self; it wants to be fully accepted and embraced by the other person and it wishes not to be rejected. It wants certain areas not to be covered or hidden, separated from the true self since it leads to hypocrisy and self-contradiction. We desire intimacy—not only physically, but also on an emotional and spiritual level. Intimacy means that you can be real, you can reveal who you really are and still feel safe about it. When you dare to be vulnerable and fragile, when you are ready to expose yourself to another person, because you know that this person will accept you with all your weaknesses, you are safe with them. Intimacy equals being real and showing

who you really are without being afraid that you might be rejected. Dr. Henry Cloud describes this in the following way: *“A real connection is one in which you can be your whole self, the real, authentic you, a relationship to which you can bring your heart, mind, soul, and passion. Both parties to the relationship are wholly present, known, understood, and mutually invested. What each truly thinks, feels, believes, fears, and needs can be shared safely.”*²

Your desire for such a relationship will not evaporate simply by ignoring it. It keeps growing in you until it is satisfied. The more you deny this personal need and push it away from yourself, the greater your fear of becoming vulnerable. Sooner or later you will feel like gasping for air in a relational vacuum.

Human relationships have a real, measurable impact. Countless stories tell of people who survived seemingly impossible situations, got healed from fatal diseases because there was someone who gave them strength to persevere. Human relationships can provide impetus for unbelievable achievements, pushing people way beyond the limits of their imagination. *“The undeniable reality is that how well you do in life and in business depends not only on what you do and how you do it, your skills and competencies, but also on who is doing it with you or to you,”* says Dr. Cloud³.

Human relationships give meaning and purpose to life; they make it complete. Professionals who work with dying people report that most often their last wish is to be surrounded by their loved ones. They receive comfort and encouragement not from their successes, money, positions, qualifications or acknowledgments that they have achieved, but from the people who truly matter to them. One of the most common questions dying people ask is whether they will be remembered.

Human relationships bring healing and change; they make you a better person and provide you with energy. It is in relationships that you get hurt, but it is also only in relationships that healing can take place. Psychologists form and use their relationship to their patients as part of their therapy. It is not only professional counsel they provide, but also connection. A neurobiologist professor at UCLA, Daniel Siegel, made a discovery while researching brain function⁴. There are three criteria that are required for people to feel fulfilled and happy – 1) a healthy operation of the brain and body, 2) human relationships and 3) a sound mind that can process and organize the incoming information. The professor explains that when relationships operate as they should, it is then and only then that people are capable of changing and becoming a better person. People cannot evolve when these relationships don't work; they either remain unchanged or their condition could even deteriorate.

Below are some examples (based on research conducted by Dr. Henry Cloud) for how the quality of our relationships influences the different areas of our lives.

- It affects our life expectancy.
- It determines whether we achieve our goals or not.
- It influences the outcome of our business plan.
- It influences how much money we will make.
- It affects how our children will perform at school.

² Henry Cloud, *The Power of the Other: The startling effect other people have on you, from the boardroom to the bedroom and beyond-and what to do about it* (New York: HarperCollins, 2016), HarperCollins e-book, ch. 4

³Ibid., ch. 1.

⁴Daniel Siegel, *Pocket Guide to Interpersonal Neurobiology: An Integrative Handbook of the Mind* (New York: Norton, 2012).

- It influences our level of trust in people.
- It influences how we handle stress and failure.
- It influences our mood.

Intimate relationships always prompt you to perform better, they increase your self-awareness, make you more reliable and responsible and help you relieve built up stress.

Without a doubt, there is immense power in relationships. This power can be experienced not only in love relationships, but also in friendships. Our individualistic society seeks to exile us to unhappy, lonely islands. It makes us compete and take from others what is missing from our island. Relocating to the ‘island’ of the other person or building ‘bridges’ to them entails too many risks and could leave us vulnerable. Weakness and vulnerability violate our individualistic and powerful self-image. In reality, the desolation of our loneliness withers our souls. Hoping to receive healing, we have cast our relational nets into the world, seeking to fish for short minutes of hope and fleeting acknowledgments from cheap social media attention. But that doesn’t change how lonely people feel. You sense that it is not good for you, but you don’t know how you can fight against it, or even if you do know, you don’t dare to and maybe you are hindered by past disappointments and pains.

In the next lessons we want to provide you with tools—so if you dare to take such risks, to reveal your own weaknesses in a relationship, you will learn why it’s worth doing and how you can do it. What are the basic principles on which relationships should be built and what are the different threats that should be kept in mind? There are way too many people who cycle from ‘*harmful relationships*’ (that are abusive, humiliating, degrading and make you defenseless) to ‘*hypocritical relationships*’ (we pretend to be..., we lie about something that doesn’t even exist, etc.) and then to the ‘*No relationship*’ state. They haven’t discovered the abundant and flourishing space offered by ‘*intimate relationships*.’

Only people who have an authentic self-esteem, who accept and love themselves and feel good in their skin can build intimate relationships. If someone cannot love themselves, how could they love someone else? If they cannot accept the person they know the best and are the closest to – themselves – how could they accept anyone else? Jesus commanded to “*Love your neighbor as yourself.*”⁵ We are not supposed to love the other person more than the way we love ourselves. This command presupposes that we already love ourselves. If you love yourself, it means that you know and accept yourself. Self-love is neither narcissism nor self-hatred. People who accept and love themselves in a healthy manner are the only ones capable of recognizing and protecting their boundaries, and they can develop attachments in a relationship without fear—by giving and accepting love.

It is not good for man to be alone. Neither is it good for an engine to run without oil. It will break down and become useless. You cannot get ahead in life in the long run all by yourself. Without intimate relationships you burn out and get overused.

Your life—more than anything—is determined by the quality of your relationships.

⁵Matthews 22:39.



INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS



Part I



The Power of Friendship



Boundaries and Attachments

The Golden Rule

Effective Communication

Friends for Life

I Am Not an Island

Let's Appreciate Each Other!

True Friend or Fake Friend?

Games



| ●

Intimate Relationships The power of friendship

Boundaries and Attachments

The foundation for an intimate relationship—1.

One characteristic of intimate relationships is that people in the relationship can relate to each other while they also respect each other's boundaries. This is not as simple and self-evident as it would seem at first glance. Let's examine an everyday example.

Case study

Christie is a 28-year-old single lady who makes her own living. She loves her mother and has a good relationship with her. She regularly visits her parents. Her mother expects her to come home for all the important holidays. This is important for her mother because this is when the whole family gets together and Christie's siblings are also visiting. But Christie would like

to spend the holiday abroad with her friends for once. She dreads telling this to her mother who has already called and said that she is looking forward to seeing her. Christie is afraid to share that she doesn't want to come home, because this news would make her mother unhappy. On the other hand, if she visits her parents she won't be doing what she wants (to be with her friends) and she will feel dissatisfied. What should Christie do?

This situation clearly shows that even the most ordinary situations can result in difficult emotional challenges. If Christie really did what she wanted, she would hurt the ones so dear to her. It might seem to be a minor issue, but she finds herself in a stressful situation regarding one of her important relationships. She needs clarity and other important skills to make an emotionally balanced, mature decision of an adult. You can handle such seemingly insignificant situations well if you are able to form attachments, are aware of your own boundaries and the boundaries of others.

The ability to form attachments

From the moment of our birth—in fact, even before it—you learn how to form attachments. You are completely dependent on your mother. Children are always around their mother when they are small; this is how they feel safe and experience their love. They cannot survive without the presence and love of their mothers. Later children take objects to preschool and daycare that represent the love of their mother to them. It is only later that they develop the ability to experience and feel safe about their mother's love and love her back even when she is not around. The ability to form an attachment means that you can carry the subject of your emotion without that subject actually being present. Children will learn to be aware of and to feel the maternal love and love their moms back, even when she is not there. This enables them to attend school and make friends with their classmates. This skill will allow the 3-year-old child to play alone and a 40-year-old to go to work.

Adults can form attachments. Attachment is your ability to establish an emotional connection with another person. It's when you are able to connect in the most profound way, when you can share your feelings, dreams and fears without being afraid of rejection.

Attachment is one of the most fundamental and deepest human traits in life and in the universe. A human soul cannot exist without connections. There is an interesting law of nature that physicists refer to as maximum entropy. It states that the available energy in a closed system (such as the universe itself) is continuously dispersed. As the available energy levels reduce, entropy increases. Without an external energy input the closed system is becoming increasingly more chaotic.

In the same way, when people are alone they exclude others from their life, their internal world becomes more of a mess until it reaches the point of maximum chaos. This can be prevented only by introducing new energy into the closed system from the outside, by drawing strength from new relationships. Research has shown that when you live in a loving relationship, connected to others, you thrive and develop. In isolation people slowly perish. If you are lonely and isolated you experience pain that is working for your benefit, just like any other pain. It signals that your soul is thirsty for a connection.

The following symptoms indicate that you have difficulty in forming attachments and developing deep emotional connections:

- depression
- sense of insignificance
- feeling guilty—you cannot accept forgiveness
- addiction
- distorted thoughts like ‘I’m bad,’ ‘I’m not lovable,’ ‘my sins are worse than the sins of others,’ ‘my problems overwhelm other people,’ ‘nobody can be trusted,’ ‘everybody wants to control me,’ ‘people only pretend that they care about me’
- a sense of emptiness when you feel neither the love of others nor that you could love others
- a fear of intimacy
- panic
- anger or cynicism—anger is a natural reaction for isolation
- if you keep giving without ever accepting help from others, you deny your own weakness and neediness
- living in a fantasy world—you create an imaginary world where there is no pain, because in reality you would need connections

You can start developing an attachment to others only if you can humbly acknowledge your neediness and are ready to accept things from other people. We learn all too well how to protect ourselves in relationships when we have been hurt a few times. We isolate ourselves from others and block attachments from forming with defense mechanisms such as the following:

- denial—we deny our needs
- depreciation—we devalue the love that is available
- projection—we project our needs onto others instead of owning them
- the development of typical reactions—e.g., people who are very lonely want to look very independent, strong and confident
- obsession—we busy ourselves so there is no time for relationships
- idealization
- substitution—relationships get substituted with things (e.g., items, hobbies, entertainment, sex, alcohol, etc.)

The respect of boundaries

In an intimate relationship you can connect to the other person, yet you can also establish and clearly see where each of your boundaries are—you know where you start and end personally, as well as where the other person starts and ends. You can connect without being dissolved and merged with the other person. You know the range of your responsibilities.

Boundaries only you control:

1. **Attitude.** You are responsible for your own attitude, but not for the attitude and reactions of others. You cannot control the attitude people choose to have nor can you take responsibility for things that are beyond your control.
2. **Feelings and thoughts.** Just like in the previous case, you are not responsible for the feelings of others, but you indeed are responsible for your own feelings. “I only feel the way I do because someone did/said this or that to me” is a myth you often hear. Basically, when you say this you claim that there is nothing you can do, since the way you feel is caused by the behavior of others; i.e., you are not responsible for your own feelings. However, unless you allow or want it, no one is strong enough to implant feelings into you. You are responsible for your own emotions. You are the one who decides whether you allow certain feelings to rule over you or not. If you know and respect your own boundaries it means that you are also aware of why you feel a specific way and you also take responsibility for it. Your feelings are your own and not the feelings of other people.
3. **Actions.** You are responsible for your actions because they fall within your own boundaries. However, you are not responsible for what others do. Your actions are done by you, not someone else, so the other person is not responsible for them, only you. At the same time, the actions of another person are within their own boundaries, so you are not responsible to do what they should be doing. Everyone must tend to their duties. For example, if your neighbor has not shoveled the snow off their property you can offer your help, but fixing their problem is not your responsibility.
4. **Decisions.** If you decide to give someone an item, say yes to a favor, accept a task, undertake a responsibility, etc., you do so because this is the decision you made. It is very rare that you are at gunpoint, ordered to make certain decisions that you don’t want to make. With your decisions you also assume responsibility for their consequences. Many decisions are made so that people wouldn’t have to engage in conflicts.

When you know your boundaries and respect them, it means that you can clearly see and are comfortable with your responsibilities, feelings, thoughts, decisions, and you don’t feel responsible for the decisions, feelings and thoughts of others. Unless you clearly see these boundaries, your decisions will be based not on what is right, but on how others think or feel about that decision. You make these decisions to please others, not because this is what you want to do, but because you are afraid how the others will react. If you feel responsible for the feelings, decisions and reactions of others, you will also allow others to control you. The feelings of another person exist within their own boundaries. People who control and manipulate others with their anger, sadness and resentment are manipulative, immature and childish.

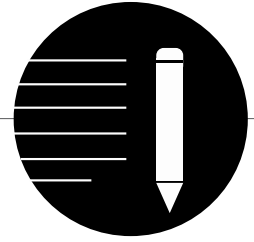
Below are some warning signs that you struggle to acknowledge your own boundaries and the boundaries of other people:

- You continuously seek approval from others. While we do need external affirmation, it does not mean that you need the approval of others in order to manage your life and decisions.
- Fear about the lack of approval and confirmation.
- You live life subjected to permission from others.

- You cannot accept when someone says no to you. People who cannot receive ‘no’ as an answer for a request do not respect the boundaries, thoughts, decisions and feelings of the other person. Such people can be manipulative, dangerous, disrespectful and even aggressive.
- It is the ‘*You cannot do this*’ or ‘*This can’t be done*’ syndrome. People who say such sentences are bound by some sort of a power and they stifle any and all creativity with their rules. They cannot get rid of the constraints that are imposed on them by their parents and build their own habits and rules.
- Inferiority complex.
- Competition.
- It’s an unequal relationship in which one gives up everything for the sake of the other person.
- The difficulty of dealing with different opinions. In such cases you think that conflicts and disagreements are bad, and you will only end up wounded and hurt afterwards. Conflicts may be necessary even if at times they result in pain.
- Black and white thinking. Everything is simple for people who follow this way of thinking. If the rules say it then they do it. They are unable to balance truth with love. In their world there are only rules that exist. They see everything in black and white, just like a young child does. Adults, however, understand that life is colorful and mysterious and black and white are only two shades of the many existing colors.
- Judgment. It’s when you place yourself above others. You only feel good when you are in the judgment seat and measure the deeds of others against your own truth.
- Impulsiveness. It is the characteristic of people with no boundaries that they deny or rebel against all authority, rules and expectations. These people are very quick-tempered and they follow nothing but their impulses.

Intimate relationships can be built only if we can connect while mutually respecting the boundaries of the other person.

LESSON PLAN



01.

Intimate Relationships
The Power of Friendship

The Golden Rule

The foundation for an intimate relationship—2.

Lesson Plan

Case study
An ideal world
Wallet test
Summary

The Purpose of the Lesson

By the end of the lesson your students learn to perceive the complexity and responsibility of moral decisions; they understand the role of trust in communities, as well as the social significance and practical usefulness of the Golden Rule.

1. Case study

15

Students should form groups of four. Read the following story out loud.

Allow a couple of minutes to discuss the questions included at the end of each section. Ask some groups to share their conclusions with the rest of the class. Continue reading the story only afterwards.

Continue by reading this text:

Part 1 of the story:

Saturday night Lee is going out with Annie, his girlfriend, to a party organized by their mutual friend. They're enjoying the great friendship, nice music and a great atmosphere, but after a while Lee sees that Annie spends more and more time with Chris; she only talks to him and dances with him.

- What do you think Lee should do?

Part 2 of the story:

Before he could do anything, Lee realizes that Annie and Chris have disappeared. He searches the house, but they are nowhere to be found. In the hallway he sees that their coat and jacket also disappeared. Apparently, they are gone. In the hall Lee sees a cell phone someone dropped on the floor.

- What should Lee do?

Part 3 of the story:

Lee takes a look at the text messages in it and it turns out that the phone belongs to Chris. He continues reading the messages because he is curious whether there have been any recent communications between Annie and Chris. There are no such messages, but he realizes that Chris has some connections with disreputable people and is making shady transactions.

- What should Lee do?

Part 4 of the story:

Before doing anything, Lee consults Pete, a trusted friend who knows Chris very well. Pete shares with him that Chris indeed does deal drugs because he badly needs the money. His father left them recently, his mother is severely ill and basically he provides for his two younger sisters as well. Pete asks Lee not to report Chris to the police.

- What should Lee do?

[It is likely that by now the students have mentioned a lot of different positions and possible solutions.]

This short story was meant to demonstrate that life is complex: you never see the whole picture, you can't exactly know the past or people's intentions and you definitely cannot know the future. It is difficult to tell what the right step is. It would be great to have a general principle that could always or almost always be applied to decide what is right in a given situation. In the next part we will look for this principle, but from a slightly different perspective.

2. An ideal world

15

Ask the following questions from the class:

- What kind of a world would you like to live in?
- What should it be like? What shouldn't it be like?

Write the answers in two columns on the board. The board should look something like this in the end:

What it should be like	What it shouldn't be like
Trust	Distrust
Honesty, transparency	Secrecy, deceit
Mutual help	Letting others down
Sense of security	Anxiety, self-defense
Patience, understanding	Impatience, misunderstandings
Satisfaction, optimism	Dissatisfaction, pessimism
Cooperation	Isolation
Initiative, activity	Waiting, passivity
The 'common wealth' increases	The 'common wealth' decreases
Taking responsibility	Avoiding responsibility

[If the answers are not taking the shape of a similar chart, ask additional questions such as: How would people behave with each other in this ideal world? What would be the most important rules?

Unfortunately, we often get responses like 'There would be no different kinds of people / cultures / ideologies / behaviors and everyone would be like me.' **You shouldn't be shocked, but instead continue asking further questions, something like the following:** It's clear what you meant, but I would be rather interested in what behavior, culture or attitude you would not like to see in your ideal world. What is it about the unknown that is uncomfortable to you? **This usually helps.]**

- What would happen if only a few people lived according to the left column in a community (village, town or country)? What would happen to them? (For example: they could be taken advantage of, they could die of starvation or they may have to flee.)
- What would happen if everyone in the community lived and behaved like they do? (For example: people would be satisfied, happy and successful, the community will develop.)
- Which community would you prefer? Why? (Let's not discuss whether it is POSSIBLE to have such a community, but about what IT WOULD BE LIKE to live in one.)

- How different would it be from the one you are currently living in? Would it be very different or just a little? Ask a couple of students to share their opinion.

Obviously, the content of the table describes two extreme cases; they don't exist in reality. But it is also clear that these are the two most important characteristics of human coexistence: either there is cooperation and you trust the other person, or you expect its opposite. Sociologists established, but also people who travel a lot or have friends/relatives in other regions or countries know first-hand, that there are huge differences between people groups and societies in this respect. Even two classes in the same school could be very different when it comes to how they relate to other people.

3. The Wallet Test

10

I will be asking two questions and you have to answer with a simple YES or NO. You don't have to signal or say the answer out loud, just quietly take note of your answers.

Let's say you find a wallet on the street with approximately \$100 cash in it. The name and cell phone number of the owner are also included in the wallet. No one saw you picking it up; you can do whatever you want without anyone checking on you. Now the two questions:

1. Would you return the wallet to its owner?
2. Do you think others would also return it?

There are only two answers in your head, either a YES or NO for the first question and another YES or NO for the second one.

This experiment has been conducted in a number of different countries all over the world. The Hungarian results are the following: 15 out of 100 people (i.e., 15%) think that they would return the wallet and so would others. 64% believe that while they themselves would return the wallet, others wouldn't. 20% think that neither them nor others would return it. And there is only 1% who believe others have more integrity, because they themselves wouldn't return the wallet, but think others would.

When the actual experiment was conducted in Budapest, Hungary, 67% of the wallets were returned to their 'owner.' This means that contrary to the self-professed 79% (15%+64%), only 67% proved to show integrity, but on a global scale it is a fairly good rate. Sadly, however, a high percentage of the participants thought other people were not honest. 84% (64%+20%) thought that others wouldn't return the wallet, even though in reality only 33% didn't

Ask the group:	return it. This difference is really huge, 51%! You might as well say that every other person is accused of being dishonest—for no reason whatsoever! • What are the consequences if there is no trust and we make bad assumptions about each other?
Listen to the answer of several students.	A lack of trust is problematic, because it makes the other party distrustful and an increasing number of people will think that their suspicions and mistrust are justified. If someone finds a wallet, they could tell themselves, “I’m not going to return it, because in a similar situation mine wouldn’t be returned either.” Consequently, less and less people will return the lost wallets to the owners.
If they don’t specifically mention it, make sure you add the following:	Let’s look at another practical example. If a teacher suspects that students will cheat on a test, he could consider it justified to put together questions that are difficult to answer, even if the students didn’t cheat. The students, however, could feel that the teacher is unfairly strict, and it will prompt them to cheat even more during the tests. This could turn into a vicious cycle. • Can you give similar examples from real life?

4. Summary

5



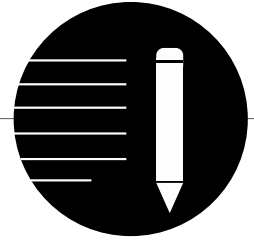
Jesus Christ, a great teacher 2000 years ago, summarized the basic principle of healthy human communities that we usually refer to as the Golden Rule:

“Do to others as you would like them to do to you.”¹

- How would your environment, schools, cities and country change if this principle was taken seriously and would be implemented?
- What would it mean for our relationships?
- What would it mean in the workplace?
- What would it mean in our families?

This is the most useful principle of human relationships.

¹Luke 6:31.



02.

Intimate Relationships
The Power of Friendship

Effective Communication

The foundation for an intimate relationship—3.

Lesson Plan

Role play: Destructive or
devoted attention

‘Head’ and ‘heart’
communication

Comfort zones

The mechanism of
listening

Application

The Purpose of the Lesson

By the end of the lesson your students will develop their empathy skills, understand the different levels of communication, realize that by stepping outside their comfort zone there is development ahead and will improve their listening skills.

1. Role play: Destructive or devoted attention

10

Ask the group to share their observations following the role play.

Ask the participants to change roles. Now the listener will be attentive, empathetic and receptive for what the speaker has to say. Such situations are referred to as “connection builders.”

Scene 1: Destructive attention—when the other person is not a partner.

[Select two students who will perform the role play. One of the students should pick an idea they are very interested in and would like to do (e.g., a weekend program together). This person will be the speaker. The other student will be the listener. This person will have to do their best to find a mistake in the other’s idea and to tear it down.]

Scene 2: Devoted attention—when the other person is a partner.

Ask the group to share their observations.

2. ‘Head’ and ‘heart’ communication

5

We communicate at different levels.

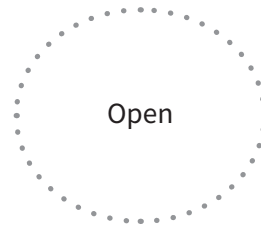
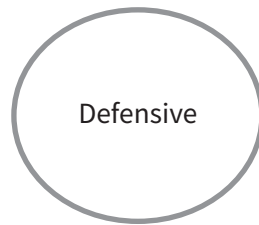
	The speaker	The listener
HEAD	facts thoughts ideas	advice solutions judgments
HEART	feelings attitude self-revealing	empathy understanding goodwill

We all communicate at different levels. When we communicate facts, ideas and thoughts, we communicate only with our mind. When we talk about emotions, attitudes and our inner self, we basically share our hearts. Our reaction to what others communicate determines how free the partners will feel to reveal more about themselves. If you only share your advice, opinion, judgment or solution you communicate at a head level. But if you react with compassion and understanding, the other party will become freer to show more of themselves. It is important to understand at what level the other person communicates in a conversation—whether it is intellectual or emotional, whether it happens on a head or a heart level. Open-ended questions can help in deepening the conversation. When someone shares their feelings, but we react with facts and suggestions, the other person will most likely also step back to the head level.

3. Comfort zones

5

Draw on the board:



Questions:

We all have our so-called comfort zones. They consist of experiences and circumstances where we feel comfortable and at ease when there is no perceived threat.

The circle with a thick outline indicates a carefully guarded comfort zone.

- What are the typical features of a person like this? What will their connections and experiences be like? How will this person evolve and change? (Such people will try to avoid everything that could make them even a tiny bit uncomfortable. This will, however, impede their growth.)

The second circle depicts a much more open comfort zone.

- What are the typical features of a person like this? What will their connections and experiences be like? How will this person evolve and change? (Such people let themselves be exposed to uncomfortable experiences and, as a result, they grow and develop.)

You can grow in your social skills only if you are ready to step outside your comfort zone; when you are willing to communicate and turn to others with understanding and empathy.

4. The mechanism of listening

15

Share the definition, the task and the goal at each phase of the listening process.

Whenever we meet someone there is a special mechanism of listening that we must consciously understand and develop. This process consists of five different steps:

1. visceral (gut) reaction
2. active listening
3. tuning in
4. identification of the basic goal
5. encounter

Discussing an important issue:

During active listening discuss that as you seek to listen to the other person, there are verbal and non-verbal tools that can destroy or build the relationship. (E.g., if you don't look into the eyes of the person, if you are distracted and are not paying attention, etc.)

1. **Visceral reaction — the first physical, emotional, mental reactions that are evoked in us by the other person.**
 - **Goal:** to explore and identify your typical reactions; e.g., fight, resistance, “freezing,” indifference etc.
 - **Action:** Recognize and fix them.
2. **Active listening — undivided, conscious attention as you are listening to the other person.**
 - **Goal:** To receive new pieces of information, ideas and perspectives as a result of the active listening.
 - **Action:** Learn to test yourself.
 - **Question:** What kinds of verbal and non-verbal tools can you apply that can build or destroy the relationship while you are listening to them?
3. **Tuning in — allow yourself to empathetically feel the situation of the other person and this way an emotional bond is formed.**
 - **Goal:** To pay undivided attention, listen carefully and understand the other person, reassure them with empathy.
 - **Action:** Practice this when someone has an issue with you the next time.
4. **The identification of the basic goal — seek to understand what message the speaker would like to get across.**
 - **Goal:** The point is to find out what they want you to understand.
 - **Action:** Whenever you engage in a conversation ask yourself, “What point is the speaker trying to make?”
5. **Encounter — Seek what connects, not what separates.**
 - **Goal:** To look for hidden connection points, topics and patterns.
 - **Action:** Ask yourself, “Where will our paths cross?”

5. Application

10

Everyone should find a conversation partner.

The group will practice their active listening skills in real life. The speaker should talk about

[At the end of the exercise ask the following question:]

- Think about how good you are at listening and rate yourself based on the following (1 = rarely, to 5 = frequently):
1. I listen to the other person without interrupting them.
 2. I notice whether the person talks at a head or heart level.

something that matters to them for 3 minutes, then the two people switch. Remind the students to pay attention to their verbal and non-verbal communication.

3. I am focusing on the person talking; I don't try to divert the conversation back to myself.
4. My face and body language show that I'm interested.
5. I don't allow the conversation to be disturbed by phone calls or other people.
6. As I'm actively listening, I do not judge or give advice to the other person.
7. I ask appropriate questions.
8. I provide feedback to reassure the person that I'm paying attention.
9. I refrain from sarcastic comments and criticism.



11.

Intimate Relationships The Power of Friendship

Friends for Life

“Two are better than one,...If one falls down, his friend can help him up.” —from the Bible¹.

Most of us would agree with the statement above. We were not created to live alone. We all need friends. Friends become friends through common experiences or just because of being in the same place at the same time. While they share their opinions, experiences, ideas, hobbies and time with one another their lives are enriched.

Jim and Daniel were best friends. They had grown up together, shared many special moments together during their past. They were friends for life, and even joined the Army together. They ended up in the same battalion while serving a tour of duty in Vietnam. During a particularly fierce battle Daniel

¹Ecclesiastes 4:9-10.

was caught in the middle of heavy gunfire and was fatally injured. From a distance, Jim saw Daniel fall and was just about to jump out into the line of fire when his captain commanded him to stay because he would only get himself killed. Jim didn't obey; he went out, scooped up his friend and headed back to cover. As he tried to carry Daniel back to safety, Jim was also fatally wounded. He made it back and collapsed in front of his captain. The captain exclaimed, *"Son, I told you it wasn't worth going out to get him. Now I've lost both of you."* Jim's last words were these: *"It was worth it, sir. When I reached Daniel he said, 'Jim, I knew you'd come back for me.'"*

What are the characteristics of a good friend?

A good friend is someone who is loyal to you. A friend is someone with whom you can share your feelings, hurts, secrets and most intimate thoughts, without fear of rejection. A friend accepts you and remains committed to you regardless of your performance or weaknesses. You can trust this person. Friends make sacrifices for each other; they are willing to sacrifice their time, energy or schedules for each other. It is the committed friend who helps meet our need for love and acceptance.

Not long ago, a statistic was published that 35% of all Hungarians say they do not have even one good friend. Let us assume this statistic is true. What causes people to not have friends? What hinders people from making friends easily?

If people do not feel loved and accepted, they will tend to go to one of two extremes. Both of these extremes hinder them from developing friendships. The more outgoing temperaments will tend to overdo everything—talk too much, brag about themselves and their adventures, dominate activities. The more introverted personalities will tend to withdraw, isolate themselves, become lonely and fear involvement with people.

Reasons why people do not have friends

- **Comparison.** Comparing ourselves with others can lead to either a sense of inferiority and timidity or a desire to compete against the other person and may even cause a dislike of them.
- **Low Self-Esteem.** Feeling insecure prevents a person from freely participating in a friendship in a deep and meaningful way. A person suffering from a poor self-image is often too preoccupied with his own self-concept to be able to concentrate on someone else in a relationship. He may also, unconsciously, be seeking to get constant reassurance from the other person in order to make him feel better about himself. This drains the other person and eventually ruins the relationship.
- **Retreat and Withdrawal.** If a person does not reciprocate in a conversation or respond positively to friendly initiation, a friendship cannot grow. In communication, both parties must listen and talk. It is important that we do not pull away or become overwhelmed by shyness when meeting someone new. This appears to others as if we do not want to get to know them, that we are pushing them away. Learn to participate!
- **Selfishness.** This kind of person tends to dominate others and demands his own way. He only wants to talk about himself and what he wants to do. He is uninterested in what the other person wants or thinks. If the other person does not want to go along with his ideas, he may

get angry or even stop being friends with that person. It is extremely difficult to be friends with a selfish person.

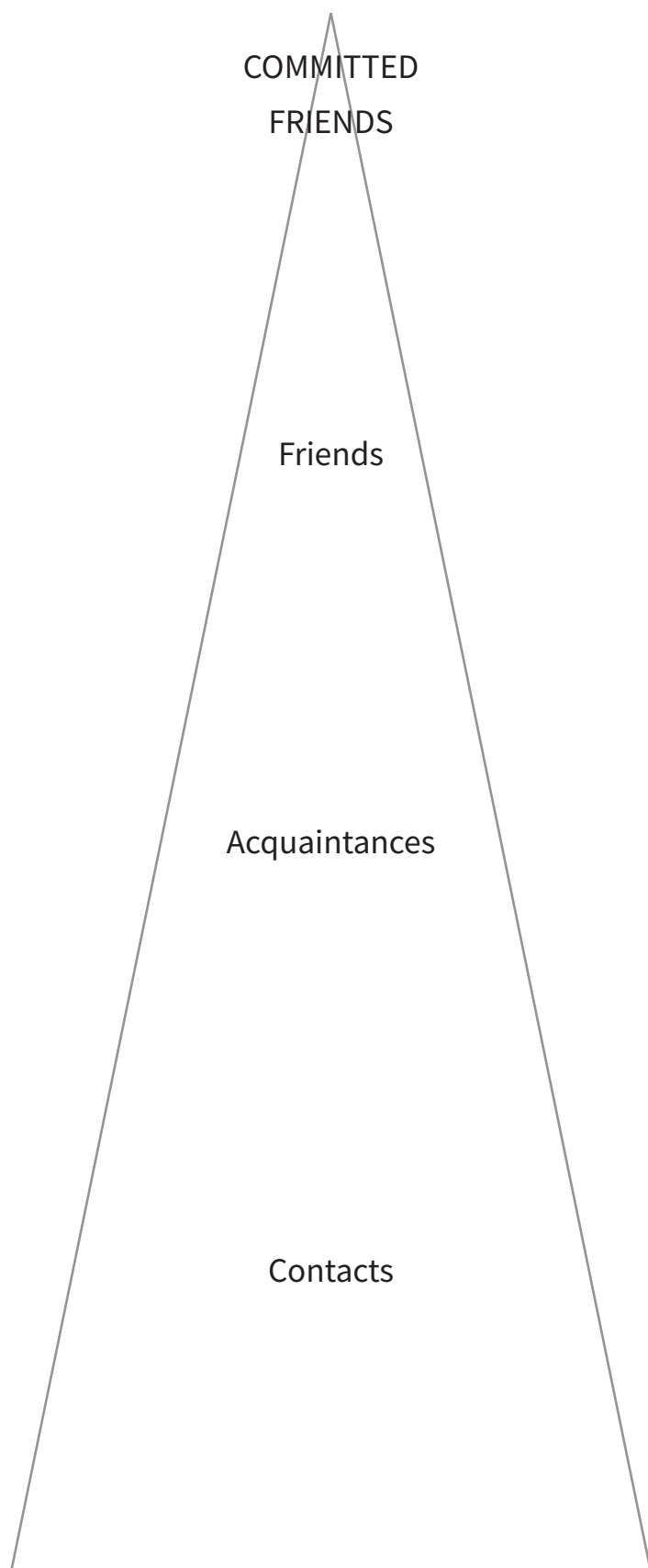
- **Gossip.** Repeating confidential information causes a break in trust. This can very quickly and irreparably ruin a friendship. It is important to learn not to talk about some things we know. Sharing someone else's "secrets" may seem like an important or fun thing to do, but it can cause great pain and enormous misunderstanding. Another thing to be aware of is that talking too much and sharing too many negative opinions is discouraging to others. People have enough problems already; they do not really want more. Most people prefer to be around those who encourage them and lift their spirits instead of those who only share their miseries with them.
- **Lack of Accepting Others.** Tolerance is desperately needed for relationships to grow. No two people are exactly the same. Despite the closeness we achieve with someone, there will always be differences in ideas, habits, tastes, opinions and feelings. It is essential to learn as much as we can about others and look for things we can admire or respect in them, despite the differences between us. Overlook faults! Patience and kindness are needed! Remember, we all have problems and weaknesses. We all have a need to be understood and accepted. Jesus gave us a "Golden Rule" for developing friendships when He said, "*Do to others as you would have them do to you.*" In other words, treat people the way you would like them to treat you.

Developing Friendships

Different levels of communication

It is important for us to know that not everyone we meet in our lifetime will become our friend. There are very few people with whom our relationship will deepen enough to become a friendship. Friendship is based on a mutual commitment to be friends with one another, and not on the fact that you need a friend. Giving is one of the highest values in life and friendship is based on giving.

Friendships are not all the same. Surely, we have all noticed that there are some people we are closer to than others. It is natural for us to have different levels of relationships with a large variety of people. Teenagers sometimes have difficulties in relationships because they do not understand this fact. They may expect all relationships to be of the same intensity and are, therefore, frustrated when this does not take place. To help you in explaining the complexity of relationships and communication, we have categorized relationships into four groups: contacts, acquaintances, friends, and committed friends. Of course this is an artificial kind of division; people do not necessarily fall clearly into these categories. But, for the sake of discussing how friendships develop, the concept of four "levels" of friendship can be very valuable. Consider the categories explained below.



Feelings

At this level, friends are willing to share their true feelings to one another. There is regular and meaningful conversation. Not only ideas and general information are shared, but also opinions and feelings about things. These are the people we trust and with whom we can be totally transparent. A committed friend is one who knows everything about us and still totally accepts us. This kind of person listens to our wildest ideas without scolding or laughing at us. He also knows how to share constructive criticism in such a way that we listen and consider it. With this kind of friend, the relationship consistently becomes deeper and richer. Most people only have one or two people as committed friends.

Few thoughts and common interests

Most people have only a few friends. We share with them not only facts, but also thoughts and opinions. We regularly initiate meaningful conversations with them. In this kind of relationship, we begin to show our real selves to the other person. We talk about things we like and dislike, we discuss our views about different issues. This kind of relationship is deeper than relationships in either of the previous two categories and it continues to deepen over time. We might say, "I don't really like Joe because he is so negative all the time." "I think Mr. Smith is a really good teacher," or "I think drugs are for losers, what do you think?"

Facts

These are people like classmates, teachers, neighbors, etc. There can be quite a number of people like this in our lives. We see and talk with them regularly, but we only talk about facts. We spend more time talking with acquaintances than with contacts, but every topic we discuss is public information that anyone could know. We don't share personal things about others or ourselves with our acquaintances. Our relationships with this group of people is a little deeper than with the previous group, but it is still on the shallow side. We say things like, "What was our homework assignment?" "What is the new girl's name?" "Where is the bus stop?" "This teacher is known for his hard tests." "Nice dress, where did you buy it?"

Clichés and small talk

These are people like the grocer or the postman whom we see regularly, but do not really know. We encounter numerous people from this group every day. We usually exchange clichés with them and not much more. We never share anything personal like feelings or thoughts with them. Our relationship with them is extremely superficial. We discuss simple topics and have short conversations which might include phrases like: "Wow, those apples are nice!" "I've never seen a fruit like this before, what is it?" or "Nice weather we're having."

Attitude

Along with an increasing depth in communication there also needs to be a “friendly, positive attitude.” This attitude enables us to focus on the other person. If we are focused on ourselves, we are worried about what the other person thinks about us and our behavior. When we are friendly or “other-focused,” we notice what the other person likes or does not like, what interests him, and what his needs are. This kind of attitude encourages deeper conversations and transparency; people open up their hearts to one another because they feel safe with each other. A committed friendship and deep communication does not come about in a day. When the attitude of positive friendliness is missing, the relationship has little chance of deepening.

1. **Be yourself.** Do not try to appear to be different from that you are. People are attracted to those who are genuine. Do not allow others’ opinions of you to stifle who you really are inside; your tastes, your sense of humor, etc. If you are nervous, the other person will also be nervous and conversation will become shallow and tense. Do not focus on your own weaknesses; focus instead on the other person and what they are saying. They are people with weaknesses just like you. Consider them an equal and not above or below you.
2. **Get to know the other person by asking questions.** People generally like to talk about themselves. Encourage them by asking a few questions. This will make it easier to find a topic you can easily discuss and, in the meantime, learn a little more about them.

The following can help you ask the most appropriate questions:

- Do not ask “yes-no” questions; these stifle conversation because there is nothing more to say. Instead of asking, “*Did you like the teacher’s lecture on friendship?*” ask “*What did you like about the teacher’s lecture on friendship?*” Learn to ask “*Why?*” You will be amazed at how much longer you can discuss a topic and how much more you will learn by using this question. At the same time, we need to be aware that this is not a question that is appropriate in every situation. If used too often, it can cause others to feel like they are being interrogated. Be sensitive to how the person might feel. Learn to use *why* questions appropriately.
- Listen to the other person. Asking questions helps to initiate conversation, but listening to the answers helps to keep it going. It is important that we do not wander off in our thinking while the other person is talking, considering our response before he has even quit speaking. Allow him to finish and then take a few seconds to formulate a reply. Show interest in the other person by looking them in the eyes, following their thought process and not rushing them or cutting them off before they are through talking. In doing this you will get to know one another better and discover the preferences and experiences you have in common, as well as differences between you. If you disagree or have different tastes, you can express that with gentleness and kindness. However, be careful when and how you do this. Sometimes it’s best to wait because it’s not good if our differences close down the ability to converse as we’re first getting to know someone.

Four personality types

In order to develop friendships, it is important to understand who we are and learn how to express our thoughts and feelings as we communicate with others. There is also value in discovering how people

differ from each other. Hippocrates (460-370 BC) was the first to recognize personality differences in people and offer a theory to account for these differences. He proposed that there are four basic personality types. Some psychologists still use this model to help them understand the differences between people. These four personalities have both strengths and weaknesses. If we understand the differences and recognize which characteristics are true of us, then we will better understand our own behavior, as well as the behavior of those around us. This in turn will cause us to have greater appreciation of our relationships with others. There are strengths, weaknesses and characteristics to each of these four types. At the end of this article you will find a copy of the Temperament Test, which can help you and your students discover which of the four you most resemble. Most of the time the characteristics of one or two of these personality types are dominant for each individual.

Melancholic

Definition. The word melancholy was originally used to mean “sad, gloomy or depressed;” now, however, its meaning has changed to “pensive, to consider or to think deeply.” Melancholy personality types express deep thoughtfulness. They like time for themselves – for quietness. They are very feelings-oriented. Their emotions can lift them to the heights of ecstasy or bring them to the depths of despair. They like to take time to just think. They enjoy socializing, but are not pushy and prefer others to initiate interaction with them.

Strengths. Melancholy people are insightful, sensitive and conscientious. They are able to build good relationships because they are loyal, sensitive and have effective communication skills. In their work they can be described as precise, meticulous, analytical, well organized and self-disciplined. They are self-sacrificing, quiet, unobtrusive people who are often gifted in the arts, poetry and music.

Weaknesses. Melancholy people are moody and often depressed. They tend to become isolated from others because of their hopeless attitude, negativity and reluctance to participate and are perfectionists. Due to their self-sacrificing nature, they are often unresisting and compliant which results in their being easily “walked on.” They can be very critical, touchy and even vengeful. Melancholy personality types tend to be fearful and suspicious of new people and situations, especially if they have had disappointing experiences in the past. They can also be perceived as unsociable.

Phlegmatic

Definition. A phlegmatic person is typically calm and unruffled and, therefore, is often perceived as unemotional. They are very hard to motivate or arouse to action. They like to read and do things like crossword puzzles. They are good-humored and relaxed. They will sit back and take it easy with a smile on their face. The song title they exemplify is “*Don’t worry, be happy.*”

Strengths. Phlegmatic people are diplomatic people and good to have around when things become stressful. They are easy-going and likable. They are well-organized people who are practical and dependable with details. Phlegmatic personality types are patient and accepting. They have a very dry sense of humor; things will be funny to them that amuse no one else. They easily build relationships with many different types of people.

Weaknesses. The weaknesses of phlegmatic people include being unmotivated, lazy and blasé. They are indecisive and tend to be selfish. Their characteristic nonchalance causes them to

be perceived as uncaring, cold or unfriendly. They can watch too much television and tend to be spectators rather than participants in life.

Summarizing thoughts on the two introverted temperaments:

The phlegmatic and the melancholy tend to use their energy inwardly to reflect, think and conceptualize. Their aim is to understand the world, not change it as the extroverted temperaments tend to do. In the work place, the phlegmatic cooperates with co-workers while the melancholy ensures the quality of the work.

Sanguine

Definition. Sanguines are cheerful, confident and optimistic individuals. They enjoy singing in the shower. When writing letters they use numerous exclamation points. They nickname all their buddies. They are commonly known as the “life of the party.”

Strengths. They have the ability to carry hope and joy and make others feel important. Their optimism and hope prevents them from being troubled by anything for very long. They are never at a loss for words and are quite capable of demonstrating an exuberant flow of them in conversation. They are compassionate and joyful people who are often spontaneous. They always have a multitude of friends wherever they go. They are good salesmen and can talk almost anyone into anything.

Weaknesses. They tend to be undisciplined and disorganized. They exaggerate and use too many superlatives which often results in lying. They usually talk too much and are interruptive, having an opinion about everything. They are loud. They become insecure easily when they are not encouraged. They can be viewed as shallow and self-absorbed because of their loudness and constant desire to be the center of attention.

Choleric

Definition. This word comes from the word “cholé” which was used in medieval times for “gall.” At that time the gall bladder was considered to be the source of all anger. While this personality type is easily angered and quick-tempered, he is best described as prepared and disciplined. Choleric people tend to be highly motivated, self-starters who work hard. They persevere through the difficulties associated with work and everyday life while continuing to do too much.

Strengths. They are decisive, confident, unafraid and courageous. They are also extremely productive. They are natural-born leaders who will always speak their minds. Choleric personality types are good developers of multifaceted projects. They are reliable and responsible, they never procrastinate. They exhibit strength, toughness and perseverance.

Weaknesses. Choleric people are often irritable and will go into angry rages. They can go from hot to cold very quickly. They can be critical and bossy. They will often be insensitive and run roughshod over others when under pressure. They are often sarcastic. They tend to be goal oriented to the detriment of their relationships or their own health. They have a tendency to use people to achieve their own ends. They are characterized by their rushed and active attitude toward life, often not considering their own emotions. Emotions are, in fact, the least developed segment of their lives.

Summarizing thoughts on the extroverted temperaments:

These two personality types tend to use their energy outwardly by focusing on things, activities and people. Their aim is to change the world. In the work-place the choleric “overcomes barriers” in order to achieve their goals while the sanguine “influences and motivates others” to accomplish things.

The ultimate friendship

(Judeo-Christian content follows.)

Is it possible to be loved and accepted at your worst by a friend who is faithful to the end and always committed to your good? Elvis Presley once said, *“I feel intensely lonely at heart. On stage I might be a sex symbol, but when I close the door I weep like a little baby.”* All of his close friends said he longed to know whether or not he was valuable in and of himself. Image is definitely not everything. All of us have a need to know that we are valuable, worthy of love and important.

Many believe and have experienced that our needs for love, acceptance, value and importance are met by entering into a friendship with God. They believe that God wants to meet the deepest needs in our lives and has already taken steps to do so. By creating us in his image, as mentioned in the book of Genesis in the Bible, he shows us that we have innate value and importance to him. He made us like himself—having a mind, will and emotions. Other parts of creation did not receive this distinction. While they were pronounced “good” by God, it was only the human male and female that were pronounced “very good.” His image was created in us!² We are objects of his love and have both value and importance. Jesus demonstrates this when he summed up his purpose in stating, *“I have come that you may have life, and have it more abundantly!”*³

Because we are created in God’s own image, we are free to exercise our own will. We are people, not robots that only respond to stimuli. Yet, according to the Bible we misused our choices. Instead of desiring a relationship with God as a loving father and freely following him as God, by choice, we went our own way and friendship with God was broken. The Bible calls this sin. We all have sinned and fallen short of the glory (approval) of God.⁴ In other words, in going our own way we missed the mark of his perfect plan for us. We “fall short” of the abundance he wants us to experience because we sinned. We refused to maintain a friendship with him and we went our own way.

Yet God stayed loyal. He pressed on in his commitment to us. We still had value to God. This fact was never more clearly shown than in the life of Jesus Christ. God demonstrated his commitment to us by sending his Son, who died in our place while we were his enemies because of our sin. *“Greater love has no man than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.”*⁵ This is exactly what he did to take away the penalty of our sin; Jesus died for us to be forgiven and to restore the broken friendship between us and God. *“God demonstrates his own love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died in our place.”*⁶ *“Christ died for our sins...was buried...and rose from the dead on the third day.*

²Genesis 1:26.

³John 10:10.

⁴Romans 3:23.

⁵John 15:13.

⁶Romans 5:8.

After this he appeared to Peter, then his twelve friends and then, more than five hundred eyewitnesses saw and met with him.”⁷

In order to enter into a friendship with God, we have to do something. The Bible says, *“To those who receive him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in Christ’s Name.”⁸* What does this mean? It means that we must make a decision with our mind, our will and our emotions to receive that which Jesus offers us. He died to allow us to be forgiven of sin, and he rose from the dead to give us his life, his resurrected life to enable us to live new lives! Receiving him by faith means that with our emotions we desire Jesus to come into our lives; that we desire a friendship with him. It also means that with our minds we accept certain things to be true: that he died to forgive us, that we need him, and that he rose from the dead to give us a new life. Faith is ultimately a decision of our will; we must accept him into our lives. We can turn to him in faith and pray, *“Lord Jesus, I need you. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive you as Savior and Lord. I want a friendship with you. I want you to take control of my life and make me the kind of person You want me to be. Thank you for forgiving me. Amen.”*

(End of Judeo-Christian content.)

Conclusion

Friendships are a vital part of life. Not having friends is one of the saddest and most painful experiences one can have. Teens are at a point in their lives when friendships are particularly important. They are beginning to develop lasting relationships. Helping them in this critical area can result in lifelong satisfaction and security within their relationships, both in developing and maintaining those relationships.

⁷1 Corinthians 15: 3-6.

⁸John 1:12.



STUDENT NOTES

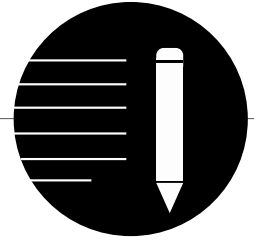
TEMPERAMENT QUIZ

Mark only those questions that are true about you, leave the others blank. Don't linger on any question too long; put down your first response or impression.

- S ____ 1. People say I am very friendly.
M ____ 2. I have only a few friends, but we're really close!
C ____ 3. I am a natural born leader.
P ____ 4. I would rather save my money than spend it.
S ____ 5. I enjoy life!
M ____ 6. I like every detail to be perfect.
M ____ 7. I am moody; I never know what feelings will rule my day when I get up in the morning.
M ____ 8. I find it easy to criticize people or things.
C ____ 9. I get angry easily.
P ____ 10. I find it hard to make decisions.
P ____ 11. Things rarely make me angry or upset.
S ____ 12. I like to tell colorful stories when I am with a group of people.
S ____ 13. I have been told that I am not very dependable.
M ____ 14. I have a lot of self-discipline.
C ____ 15. I have been told that I am cold and unfeeling.
C ____ 16. I am decisive.
P ____ 17. I have a dry sense of humor.
P ____ 18. I like to lay around and do nothing.
S ____ 19. I am not very organized.
P ____ 20. I like watching more than participating.
C ____ 21. I find it hard to forgive others.
C ____ 22. I get a lot of things done in a short period of time.
S ____ 23. I am often told I speak too loudly.
M ____ 24. I tend to be hesitant and pessimistic.
P ____ 25. I am not very motivated.
P ____ 26. I am very patient.
S ____ 27. I love to talk.
M ____ 28. I don't really enjoy big parties; I'd rather be with a few close friends.
S ____ 29. I am an enthusiastic person.
C ____ 30. People tell me I am a very bold risk-taker.
C ____ 31. I have clear opinions about things.
P ____ 32. I like to sleep.
C ____ 33. I like being in control of situations and events.
M ____ 34. I don't make friends easily.
M ____ 35. I really like the arts; they speak to my soul of souls.
S ____ 36. I love almost everybody.
C ____ 37. I am very confident.
M ____ 38. I often think people don't like me.
S ____ 39. I am generous with my money.
P ____ 40. I feel tired a lot.

S _____ C _____ M _____ P _____

LESSON PLAN



03.

Intimate relationships
The Power of Friendship

I Am Not an Island!

Lesson plan

I am not an island!
The Tangle—game
Voting—exercise
Story of Damon and
Pythias
Genuine friendship

The Purpose of the Lesson

By the end of the lesson your students will learn to distinguish between the different types of relationships, learn the important part these relationships play in their lives and recognize some factors that are required to build lasting and stable relationships.

1. I am not an island!

10

On the whiteboard,
write: “NO MAN IS
AN ISLAND ENTIRE
OF ITSELF.”

John Donne, an English poet and clergyman (1572-1631), said that “*No man is an island entire of itself.*”¹ I would like us to think together for a moment about this quote:

- What do you think he meant when he said no person is an island?
- How would it feel to be an island?
- In what ways are we connected to other people?

When we say that no one is an island, we mean that people need other people.

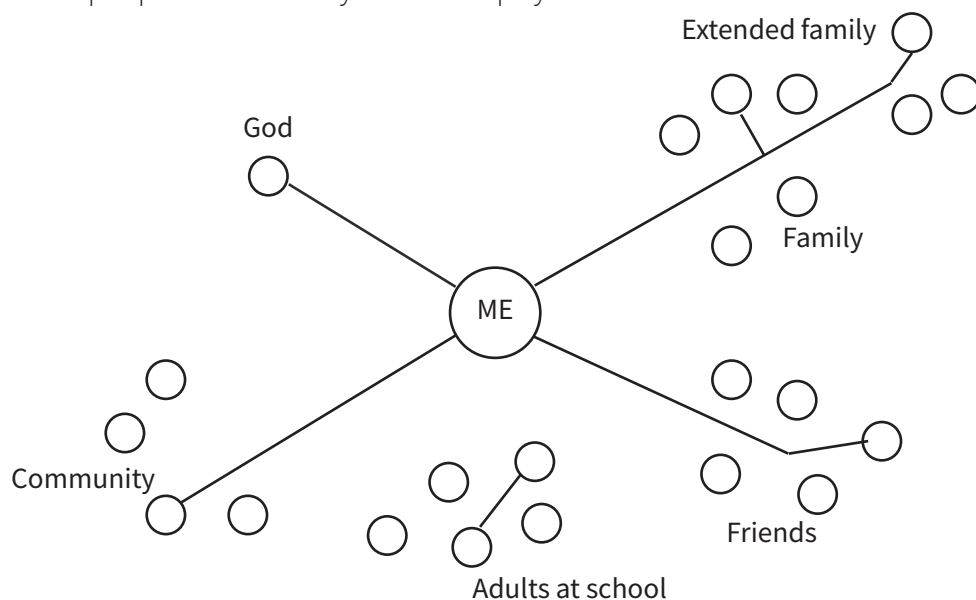
When we are young (as well as when we are very old), we need other people to provide our basic physical needs for food, clothing and shelter.

People provide more than physical nurturing for each other. Humans are social creatures, and we function best when there are others around us. Other people can teach us or provide us with the information we need to accomplish our goals. They give us support when we go through difficult times and celebrate with us when we are glad. They also share activities and experiences with us. Through them we gain perspective on life and on ourselves that we would not have without them. We can do these same things for the people in our lives.

Types of relationships

- Have you ever counted how many connections you have to other people or how many relationships you have?

Demonstrate for your students how to branch out from the “ME” circle to show their relationship connections. (Draw your own chart on the whiteboard as you talk about the different types of relationships. Leave the chart on the whiteboard for the rest of the lesson.) A completed chart might look something like this:



¹John Donne, “Meditation XVII,” in *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions: Together with Death’s Duel*, ed. William Henry Draper, Abbey Classics (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1926).

Family

We all have connections to family members, or to people who are so close that they are almost like family to us. Your immediate family includes your parents, others who helped raise you, brothers and sisters. Your extended family includes people like your grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.

Friends

Most of us have friends or people with whom we choose to spend time because we enjoy one another's company. Some of us have a friend with whom we are especially close—a best friend.

Adults at school

Students spend much of their time at school, and there are several adults with whom they interact each day in class or on the school grounds.

God

Many people overlook the spiritual side of life, but whether they remember it or not, people also have a connection with God. For some people, the relationship with God is the most important relationship in their life.

Community

Finally, people have many connections in their community. This would include leaders, neighbors, business people, people who belong to the same club or church, doctors and many others.

Does it surprise you to see how many people with whom you are connected? You are certainly not an island!

2. The Tangle—game

15

Most often, students will be able to untangle themselves.

However, other possibilities include:

1. It is impossible to achieve a circle.

2. There are actually two (or even three) circles in the group.

[Divide your students into groups of 10-15. Have each group stand and form a close circle. The students should close their eyes and extend their arms into the center of the circle and hold one of the hands of two other students, grasping a different one with each hand. This will look somewhat like the hub of a wheel, except that the hands all criss-cross in the center. Now explain that without letting go of each others' hands, the group must untangle itself to form a circle where each student is holding hands with the students to his or her left or right.]

Untangled!

- Why were you able to succeed in your efforts to untangle your circle?

[Or if a group was unable to do so:]

After a few minutes, if one group is hopelessly entangled, you may have the students all return to their seats.

- Why were you unable to succeed in your efforts to untangle your circle?

[Look for and highlight answers that indicate success depending on the ability to:

- cooperate with others
- communicate clearly
- help others
- work together
- see the effects one action would have on the group.]

Failure, then, would depend on the inability or refusal to do these things.

- How did you feel at different points in the game? (Excited? Frustrated? Angry? Included? Left out? Helpful?)

Perhaps you have different feelings about your *"I Am Not an Island"* chart, too. Some of you may feel encouraged that you are connected to so many people. Others of you may look at your chart and think something like this: *"Even though it looks like I have a lot of relationships, I still feel lonely."*

- "In fact, I sometimes feel like I am an island—like I really don't have connections with anyone else. Why is that?"

There are a couple of reasons why someone whose life is connected to the lives of many other people could still feel like an island.

- You can feel like an island if you are not connected to anyone on a physical, social, emotional, mental and spiritual level.
- You can feel like an island if your connections with other people are weak.
- Lack of deep connections can also make a person feel like an island.
- You can feel like an island if you are in a new or unfamiliar environment.
- Many people also find themselves in a new family setting because of death, divorce, remarriage or because other family members have moved in with them.

All these factors can lead to a person feeling like an island for a period of time.

- Write the names of the one or two people with whom you currently have the strongest relationships. Also write down a few of the factors that make these relationships strong.

The depth of the fulfillment we achieve in our lives depends on the strength of our relationships. Since relationships provide this foundation for our lives, it is important for us to learn how to build a strong foundation with our relationships and not settle for a weak one.

3. Voting — exercise

5

Write the following list on the whiteboard: Each student should put a check-mark next to the three listed attributes that he or she feels are most important in choosing a friend. When every student has had a chance to vote for three attributes, note which attributes seem most important to the class as a whole.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• sense of humor• smart• loyal• athletic• popular• shared interests• kind• shared beliefs/values | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• good looking• trustworthy• good listener• honest• rich• generous• flexible• responsible |
|---|--|

4. Story of Damon and Pythias

10

The story of Damon and Pythias takes place in the fourth century B.C. in Syracuse, a city-state in Sicily. According to the Roman orator Cicero², the two men were followers of the philosopher Pythagoras.

Damon and Pythias were best friends. From the time they were boys, they had done everything together. They had played together and studied together. They were as close as brothers and trusted each other completely.

Pythias was an out-spoken man and often gave speeches in public. In his speeches, he said that no king should have absolute power over his subjects.

When King Dionysius heard about Pythias's speeches, he became angry. He summoned Pythias and Damon to appear before him. When the friends arrived, Dionysius ordered Pythias to take back what he had said. Pythias replied, *"I cannot do that. I speak only the truth, and no man should be stopped from speaking the truth."*

Dionysius grew even angrier and decided to execute Pythias for treason.

Pythias still did not offer to change his views, but he did ask the king for permission to go back to his home and set his household in order before he was executed.

²Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Officiis* = on Duties, trans. Walter Miller, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1913).

The king laughed out loud. *"If I let you leave the city to go home, you will never return!"*

Pythias responded, *"I will return. I will leave you a pledge to guarantee it."*

"And what will you leave in pledge?" asked the king.

At this point, Damon stepped forward. *"I will be the pledge,"* he said. *"Everyone knows about my friendship with Pythias. You can be certain that he will return as long as you hold me in prison."*

"You understand," said the king to Damon, *"that if Pythias does not return within the set amount of time, I will execute you in his place."*

"I understand," said Damon. *"But, Pythias will return. He has given his word."*

So Pythias left for home, and his friend Damon was thrown in prison. After several days had passed, Dionysius went down to see Damon in prison. *"Your friend hasn't returned,"* he scoffed. *"What do you think of him now?"*

"He will return," said Damon. *"I trust him completely."*

The king shook his head and walked away. A few days later, he returned to Damon's cell. *"The time is almost up,"* he said. *"I don't think your friend is coming back. You were a fool to believe him."*

Damon looked at Dionysius and said calmly, *"If it is humanly possible, Pythias will return. He must have been delayed by trouble on the road."*

The king was amazed by Damon's confidence. But the day came for the execution, and Pythias had not returned. The executioner brought Damon up from the prison. Dionysius asked Damon one last time, *"Do you still call Pythias 'friend'?"*

Damon smiled. *"Yes. Pythias is my friend."*

Just then, the doors flew open and in came Pythias. He looked awful. His clothes were in shreds, his body was bruised and bloody, and he was covered with dirt. He stumbled forward and collapsed into Damon's arms. *"I made it in time!"* he exclaimed. *"I'm so glad you're still alive. I was shipwrecked and then ran into robbers on the road. But I knew I had to keep going."* Pythias turned to the king. *"I am ready for my execution."*

The king was amazed. Never had he seen such loyalty and trust. He canceled the execution and announced that he would let Damon and Pythias go free. *"But first,"* he said to the two men, *"will you do me a great service?"*

"What can we do?" asked the friends.

"Please show me how I can be part of a friendship like yours."

5. Genuine friendship

5

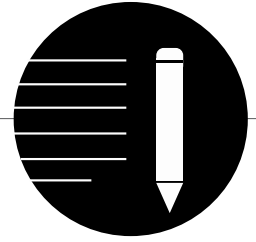
Question:

Which character in the story do you identify with the most?

- Damon: I have a friend whom I can trust to be there when I need him or her.
- Pythias: I am committed to being there whenever my friend needs me.
- King Dionysius: I feel like I have never experienced a friendship like Pythias and Damon's, but it is something I would like to and I can see that it is possible.
- None of the above: I feel more like Damon and the king would have felt if Pythias had not returned. My friends have always let me down and I am not sure if genuine friendship is even possible.

No matter which answer you chose, friendship is important to you. Even if you think that genuine friendship may not be possible, you probably wish that it were.

Today, we will look at some characteristics of genuine friendship and explore some ways to develop such a friendship. So, if you already have a genuine friend, you may learn some ways to make your friendship even stronger. If you do not have a genuine friend, you may learn some ways to start developing one—and you may gain some hope that it is possible for you to have one.



04.

Intimate relationships
The Power of Friendship

Appreciate Each Other!

Lesson plan

Like / Dislike—game
Situation resolution
—role play
Temperament Quiz
Understanding
personality types
Tack skit

The Purpose of the Lesson

By the end of the lesson your students learn to assess different ways of thinking and temperaments, understand the importance and the beauty of these differences and realize that such differences reveal that we need each other.

1. Like / Dislike—game

5

Ask the participants to write down 5 things that they like and 5 things that they dislike on the handouts. Some categories can be given as hints.

Collect the papers and read them out loud (not mentioning the names of the person who wrote them).

I like	I dislike
foods, drinks, sports etc.	foods, drinks.
a personality trait in me.	a personal weakness I have.
a general thing in the world.	in general about people.
I like it when...	I dislike it when...
a thing/item that is important to me.	something that I have to do.

- Try to figure out together who wrote the examples.
- Were there answers that surprised you? Why?
- Why is it important to get to know the other members in your group?

Today the topic is our differences and our different behavior in certain situations. There could be many reasons for this; one of them is that we are not the same. Due to these differences we can misunderstand each other. Also, others may not understand what you mean because of the way you express yourself. Let's look at some examples of these situations.

2. Situation resolution—role play

10

Have students get in groups of three to five and discuss what they would do in the given situation. Have them also discuss if there is a better way to react to the given situation and if so, why?

Situation #1

You are at a party at someone's house. The host is bringing in a tray of glasses and suddenly trips on the edge of the rug and nearly falls. If you saw this happening, what would you do?

- Make a joke out of it to ease tensions and because it looks so funny to see everything going all over the place. (Sanguine)
- Feel really sorry for her and turn away to save her some embarrassment because everyone else is staring at her. (Melancholy)
- Run over and help her pick up all the broken glass off the floor. Start telling people what to do to get it all cleaned up. You get the broom, you see if she is okay, you go find some more glasses, you find a mop to get the spilled drinks off the floor. (Choleric)
- Stay out of the way while everyone else helps out. (Phlegmatic)

Situation #2

Your best friend's birthday is coming up and the best way you can think of to celebrate it is:

- Throw a surprise birthday party. Talk it over with a bunch of your friends at the last minute. Work out a quick plan as to how you are going to get your friend to someone's house without spoiling the surprise party. Then rush to the store, pick up a few necessities like food and something to drink and, of course, a cake from a bakery. Wait for the birthday person to arrive and just have fun for the rest of the time. (Sanguine)
- Give a party that you have planned well ahead of time. Everyone has gotten an invitation with explicit instructions as to where and when the big event will be, what he or she should bring, and perhaps even gift ideas for people who might not know what to buy. You have games ready, made sure the decorations match the theme of the evening, even picked out what music you will listen to and in what order. The party will be great, and even end on time! (Choleric)
- Have a quiet evening at home. Make dinner and give a present made just for him/her (like a poem, cross-stitched pillow, handmade Bible cover, painting). (Melancholy)
- You do not make a big deal out of it. You will just tell them happy birthday that day and maybe even give them a funny card. (Phlegmatic)

Situation #3

You are walking home from school with a group of your friends and you come upon someone lying on the sidewalk. What would you do?

- Ignore him because you do not want to get involved in something complicated. (Phlegmatic)
- See if he is okay and help him up or call the police/ambulance. (Melancholy)
- Walk by, because you are in a hurry. (Choleric)
- Make fun of the person as you walk by or tell a story about another time when you were in a similar situation to get people's attention off the person on the ground. (Sanguine)

In each of these discussions you saw that the different people in the group would've done different things. There are many reasons for this, but one of them is that we are different from each other!

[Now we will have an opportunity to understand a bit better our temperament and our boundaries while we discover others as well. Our assumptions can influence how we see something. Our past, our experiences and our personalities give us a lens—and through that lens we

see events and environments and people. The Temperament Quiz will help you to discover why we react differently in similar situations. As we learn our differences, hopefully we can also learn to appreciate each other and will help you to avoid unnecessary conflicts.]

3. Temperament Quiz

10

Make copies of the Temperament Quiz found at the end of the Reading 'Friends for Life' (page 54).

[Now start filling out this quiz. Put a "T" next to every statement that is True of you and an "F" beside each statement that is False. When you are done, add up the number of "T"s next to each "S", "C", "M" and "P" letter and then write it down at the bottom of the quiz next to the corresponding letter.]

4. Understanding personality types

15

Melancholic

Definition. The word melancholy was originally used to mean "sad, gloomy or depressed;" now, however, its meaning has changed to "pensive, to consider or to think deeply." Melancholy personality types express deep thoughtfulness. They like time for themselves – for quietness. They are very feelings-oriented. Their emotions can lift them to the heights of ecstasy or bring them to the depths of despair. They like to take time to just think. They enjoy socializing, but are not pushy and prefer others to initiate interaction with them.

Strengths. Melancholy people are insightful, sensitive and conscientious. They are able to build good relationships because they are loyal, sensitive and have effective communication skills. In their work they can be described as precise, meticulous, analytical, well organized and self-disciplined. They are self-sacrificing, quiet, unobtrusive people who are often gifted in the arts, poetry and music.

Weaknesses. Melancholy people are moody and often depressed. They tend to become isolated from others because of their hopeless attitude, negativity and reluctance to participate and are perfectionists. Due to their self-sacrificing nature, they are often unresisting and compliant which results in their being easily "walked on." They can be very critical, touchy and even vengeful. Melancholy personality types tend to be fearful and suspicious of new people and situations, especially if they have had disappointing experiences in the past. They can also be perceived as unsociable.

Phlegmatic

Definition. A phlegmatic person is typically calm and unruffled and, therefore, is often perceived as unemotional. They are very hard to motivate or arouse to action. They like to read and do things like crossword puzzles. They are good-humored and relaxed. They will sit back and take it easy with a smile on their face. The song title they exemplify is “Don’t worry, be happy.”

Strengths. Phlegmatics are diplomatic people and good to have around when things become stressful. They are easy-going and likable. They are well-organized people who are practical and dependable with details. Phlegmatic personality types are patient and accepting. They have a very dry sense of humor; things will be funny to them that amuse no one else. They easily build relationships with many different types of people.

Weaknesses. The weaknesses of phlegmatic people include being unmotivated, lazy and blasé. They are indecisive and tend to be selfish. Their characteristic nonchalance causes them to be perceived as uncaring, cold or unfriendly. They can watch too much television and tend to be spectators rather than participants in life.

Summarizing thoughts on the two introverted temperaments:

The phlegmatic and the melancholy tend to use their energy inwardly to reflect, think and conceptualize. Their aim is to understand the world, not change it as the extroverted temperaments tend to do. In the work place, the phlegmatic cooperates with co-workers while the melancholy ensures the quality of the work.

Sanguine

Definition. Sanguines are cheerful, confident and optimistic individuals. They enjoy singing in the shower. When writing letters they use numerous exclamation points. They nickname all their buddies. They are commonly known as the “life of the party.”

Strengths. They have the ability to carry hope and joy and make others feel important. Their optimism and hope prevents them from being troubled by anything for very long. They are never at a loss for words and are quite capable of demonstrating an exuberant flow of them in conversation. They are compassionate and joyful people who are often spontaneous. They always have a multitude of friends wherever they go. They are good salesmen and can talk almost anyone into anything.

Weaknesses. They tend to be undisciplined and disorganized. They exaggerate and use too many superlatives which often results in lying. They usually talk too much and are interruptive, having an opinion about everything. They are loud. They become insecure easily when they are not encouraged. They

can be viewed as shallow and self-absorbed because of their loudness and constant desire to be the center of attention.

Choleric

Definition. This word comes from the word “cholé” which was used in medieval times for “gall.” At that time the gall bladder was considered to be the source of all anger. While this personality type is easily angered and quick-tempered, he is best described as prepared and disciplined. Cholerics tend to be highly motivated, self-starters who work hard. They persevere through the difficulties associated with work and everyday life while continuing to do too much.

Strengths. They are decisive, confident, unafraid and courageous. They are also extremely productive. They are natural-born leaders who will always speak their minds. Choleric personality types are good developers of multifaceted projects. They are reliable and responsible, they never procrastinate. They exhibit strength, toughness and perseverance.

Weaknesses. Choleric people are often irritable and will go into angry rages. They can go from hot to cold very quickly. They can be critical and bossy. They will often be insensitive and run roughshod over others when under pressure. They are often sarcastic. They tend to be goal oriented to the detriment of their relationships or their own health. They have a tendency to use people to achieve their own ends. They are characterized by their rushed and active attitude toward life, often not considering their own emotions. Emotions are, in fact, the least developed segment of their lives.

Summarizing thoughts on the extroverted temperaments:

These two personality types tend to use their energy outwardly by focusing on things, activities and people. Their aim is to change the world. In the workplace the choleric “overcomes barriers” in order to achieve their goals while the sanguine “influences and motivates others” to accomplish things.

5. Tack skit



Watch the video of the four basic personality types.
<https://youtu.be/k7mEh53rTc0>

This skit shows the reaction of different personality types when they discover that there is an imaginary tack under them.

Choleric

[Sits down and pops up out of his chair with a stern, irritated face and tone of voice. He points threateningly at everyone in the room and says:]

If you choose, you may do this skit as a demonstration of how these personality types respond in certain situations.

"Okay, who did it? Everybody against the wall...no one is getting out of here until I find out who did this!"

Melancholic

[Sits down and immediately gets up with a very sad and dejected face. Picks up the tack and looks at it with a sigh and, just about ready to cry, states:]

"Life is like a tack: short, hard and very painful."

Sanguine

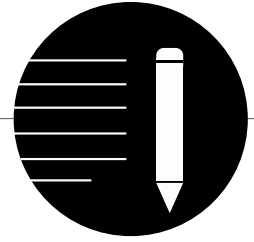
[Sanguine – Sits down and lets out a big laugh and does a thumbs up sign as he pops up out of the seat yelling:]

"You guys are great, wish I had thought of this! Who came up with this? What a super idea!"

Phlegmatic

[Sits down and slouches in his chair. After a few seconds he slowly leans to the side, pulls out the tack and flicks it away while yawning.]

Your personality type	Others generally see you as:	If your friend is:	Potential negative thoughts friends may have about you:
CHOLERIC	goal-oriented impatient insensitive decisive entrepreneur risk-taker bossy, controlling	Choleric: Sanguine: Phlegmatic: Melancholic:	You are too controlling, which does not allow them to control as much as they would like. You focus on results too much. You fail to provide a positive work environment. It is no fun to work with you. You push people too hard. You are not very diplomatic. You do things fast without thinking them through. You are too hard; you run over people to get the job done.
SANGUINE	impulsive loud, talks a lot very friendly optimistic	Choleric: Sanguine: Phlegmatic: Melancholic:	You are too emotional. You are not results- and goal-oriented enough. You always want to be in the limelight and it keeps them from even getting to be the center of attention. You are not very practical. You are too enthusiastic. You do not pay attention to the details. You act impulsively; do not think through the consequences of your actions. You are shallow, undependable.
PHLEGMATIC	diplomatic doesn't initiate hesitant always in the background too easy-going	Choleric: Sanguine: Phlegmatic: Melancholic:	You do not have a definite opinion; you are not goal-oriented enough. You work too slowly. You are not impulsive enough. You are too detached, neutral about everything. You do not initiate; this really bothers me when I have to initiate instead of you. You are too easy-going, just letting things happen instead of planning everything out.
MELANCHOLIC	precise, moody not very open smart deep thinker	Choleric: Sanguine: Phlegmatic: Melancholic:	You are too precise. You are too sensitive. You do not enjoy life enough. You are not very friendly. You worry too much. You get stressed about too many things. You want to get too deep, too fast. You try to prove that you are more right than they are, even when you both know that may not be true!



05.

Intimate relationships
The Power of Friendship

True Friend or Fake Friend?

Lesson plan

Exercise in pairs—game

Becoming a real friend

How to recognize
a fake friendship

Test

Small group activity

The Purpose of the Lesson

By the end of the lesson your students will understand how a true friendship is different from a fake one and they learn to distinguish between relationships that represent true value and the ones that do not.

1. Exercise in pairs—game

10

Ask the participants to spread around the classroom and form pairs.

Leaning against each other—squats

[Ask the pairs to follow the instructions without separating from each other. (The couples that separate are out of the game and will have to sit down):

- First, have them stand side by side and lean together on their shoulders and squat down.
- Next, have the pair stand and keep their backs pressed against one another as they squat down.
- Last, stand facing one another with foreheads touching the whole time and squat down.
- You could even have them do any of these with their eyes closed.]

Moderating

How did you feel? Which task was difficult and why? What helped you to successfully perform the task?

- Paying attention to each other, communication, trust, patience and cooperation

2. Becoming a real friend

10

Write their answers on the whiteboard and complete them if necessary.

It has already been mentioned that we need friends.

What are the most important qualities that characterize a true friendship?

- Lasting commitment to each other
- Loyalty to each other
- Trust in each other
- Keeping the promises you made to each other
- Sincere and deep care for the physical and spiritual well-being of the other person
- Willingness to make sacrifices for the other person
- Open and honest communication
- Compassion and understanding
- Respect (to appreciate the thoughts and feelings of the other person)

- A sense of responsibility (for your actions and their consequences, to acknowledge if you made a mistake)
- Forgiveness (to forgive another person if they make a mistake)
- Effort (to work on improving the relationships)

On the whiteboard you can see characteristics that we most often expect from a true friend. When it comes to finding a true friend, we most often pay attention to our own expectations. *‘How great it would be to have a friend who listens to me, understands me and gives me company so I wouldn’t feel so lonely.’* Unfortunately, you don’t have the power to change others, so you cannot force other people to fulfill your demands for a friendship. However, you can change your actions. You have the power to develop into a person that people would like to be friends with. If you want friends, become one.

3. How to recognize a fake friendship

5

Real friendship is a great asset. Unfortunately, not all ‘friendships’ are real. There are people who call themselves your friends, but they are far from being real friends.

Let’s collect some of the warning signs that might indicate such fake friendships:

- They use the other person for their own benefit and purposes
- They don’t keep their word
- They are not loyal to you
- They don’t trust their friends
- They don’t (or hardly) undertake lasting commitment to the other person
- They apply pressure on the other person to give up on their principles
- They don’t ever initiate and never want to spend time together

4. Test

5

If you want to become a real friend, the first step is to assess your ability to become one. The chart in the Student Notes lists the five characteristics of a true friend that have already been discussed. Record how often your actions reflect these characteristics by filling out the chart. If you want to become a real friend with someone, as a second step, select an area where you would like to develop and create a strategy to improve it.

5. Small group activity

15

Divide the participants into five groups.

Ask each group to take a piece of paper with one of the five characteristics of a true friendship from the box.

1. I keep my word.
2. I admit if I was wrong.
3. I forgive when others insult or hurt me.
4. I value others' thoughts and feelings.
5. I communicate openly and honestly.

Give them the following instructions:

Develop a strategy that you can follow to improve in the specific area you have chosen. You should propose practical steps that can be used in real situations.

Prepare a creative and resourceful presentation to share your strategy with the other participants. It can be a poem or a story, a song or even a funny sketch. Use your imagination, but the presentation cannot exceed two minutes.

Your group has five minutes to prepare a strategy and the presentation.

Watch the presentations

[Make sure each presentation takes only 2 minutes.]

STUDENT NOTES



True friend or fake friend?

Evaluate how fit and prepared you are to become a true friend to someone.

	Most of the Time	Sometimes	If I must
I keep my word.			
I admit if I was wrong.			
I forgive when others insult or hurt me.			
I value others' thoughts and feelings.			
I communicate openly and honestly.			

Develop a strategy to help you become a true friend:

- The selected area:
- Steps that I will take:



STUDENT NOTES

Am I a loyal friend?

Test

Take the test and think about why you are a loyal friend in certain areas and why you are not in others.

- ☐ I dedicate time for my friend on a regular basis.
- ☐ I will meet up with my friend, even if I have been invited to a more interesting event.
- ☐ I receive a lot of encouragement from my friend.
- ☐ We have a lot in common.
- ☐ We never run out of topics to discuss.
- ☐ I can share my deepest thoughts and feelings with my friend, because they never laugh at me.
- ☐ I can always count on them for help when I'm in trouble.
- ☐ They can always count on me when they are in trouble.
- ☐ I wish my friend the best and I'm not envious of their successes.
- ☐ My friend always wishes me the best and is not envious of my successes.
- ☐ I would never intentionally harm my friend.
- ☐ I want to assume the best, even when the circumstances are against it.
- ☐ I forgive my friend when they hurt me.
- ☐ I honestly tell my friend when they make a mistake or do something bad, and I know that they are grateful for this.
- ☐ I never lie to my friend.
- ☐ I will defend my friend if I have to.
- ☐ I say only good things about my friend, even if they are not present.
- ☐ I encourage others to think highly of my friend.
- ☐ I am always happy to help my friend whenever needed.
- ☐ I involve my friend in my plans.
- ☐ My friend is the best part of my life.
- ☐ I can hardly wait to meet my friend again.
- ☐ I like to surprise my friend in a meaningful way.
- ☐ I feel their absence when I cannot meet with my friend.
- ☐ I feel a void when we cannot spend enough time together.



Intimate relationships **The Power of Friendship**

Optional Exercises

- The participants form groups of 4-5 people. Each group prepares a skit that shows an essential characteristic of friendships. Each group performs their scene for the entire class. After each skit discuss the specific characteristic that they presented.
- Ask the participants to consider their relationships with their friends. (How do they relate to each other as friends?) Is it as it's supposed to be or must some things be changed? If the latter, the students must prepare a plan and seek to implement it.
- The participants form pairs and for a couple of minutes they discuss why people don't have friends. Then the entire class discusses the question together.

- The participants should set a goal to develop an aspect of friendship where they are under-performing. In order to have a good friend, first you must become one.
- The participants discuss in small groups when a friendship is not healthy. How can you get out of such a relationship?
- Find examples of a true friendship (or have the participants list such examples) and share them with the class. (The examples can be real people or characters from books, etc.) Explain why these are good examples of friendship.



INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS



Part II



The Beauty of Love



Waiting for the One
Lifelong Commitment
Creative Dating Ideas
True Intimacy
Love or Something Else?
Leaving a Legacy
Sex: Joy, Purpose, Responsibility
Sex in its Place
Sex at the Right Time
Games



Intimate relationships The Beauty of Love

Waiting for the One

Preparation and waiting

Why is there a need for marriage, the life-long covenant between a man and a woman?

The biggest social problem of our times is caused by the disintegration of families, the falling apart of close family ties and the failure of marriages. Cohabitation, the doubling and tripling of the proportion of children born outside marriage and the radical drop in birth rates all indicate a dramatic transformation in societal values and relational networks. Marriage, the cohabitation and covenant system that ensures social stability and growth, has faltered. Confidence in marriage has eroded, but the new, alternative forms of cohabitation haven't delivered as expected. Relationships don't last longer, neither do birth rates increase.

The sexual revolution of the 1960s, which was partly made possible by the extensive spread of modern contraceptive methods that ‘freed’ people from the responsibility of having children, quickly transformed families and the marital habits of spouses. The life-long covenant between a man and a woman—marriage—is no longer the foundation for families. There was a transformation and it carries serious consequences for the whole society. Our value system also changed as consumption became the focal point. People started having cravings for previously unknown things, which are not fundamental to our existence. The satisfaction of desires has increasingly replaced the fulfillment of needs. This requirement to satisfy our desires has been so overwhelming that it morally legitimized the exploitation and the use of other people to satisfy our own desires. As the individual and the desires of the individual became the focus, all other values have been overwritten, be it family ties, marriage oath, fidelity, commitment and personal sacrifices.

The limit to freedom #1: we need to limit our freedom to meet our needs

A society where the emphasis is on the individual and where individual, personal rights have been placed above all, will automatically find that the rights of these different individuals clash and violate each other. A huge competition was launched when individual interests were placed in the center. The question is “Whose interests will prevail?” This era doesn’t teach how people are to give up certain desires for the benefit of the other person. Instead, it teaches how people should be exploited, how our desires and opportunities should be enforced at any price since “the suppression of desires has a detrimental effect on one’s health.” However, we often have to give up our desires if we want to satisfy our actual needs. People who only fulfill their desires (craving for alcoholic drinks, tobacco, drugs or binge eating, etc.) will inevitably ignore their own needs and cause damage to themselves. Uncontrolled desires can break down the boundaries of your needs, and they can take away your freedom; if you ignore your needs, sooner or later you are destroyed to the point of not being even able to desire things any more. The same principle applies to relationships. Normal conjugal and family relationships often mean resignation of your own desires, rights, claims and expectations. Without this resignation and self-sacrifice, the family will inevitably suffer. People feel entitled to ignore and look down on others and place their own emotional and bodily desires before that of their children and spouses. However, you cannot build true happiness at the expense of other people’s unhappiness.

The limit to freedom #2: we need to limit our freedom to reach our goals

The misinterpretation of freedom and exploiting it without limitation ultimately leads to bondage. Freedom means the unlimited expression and experience of desires. This kind of freedom, however, does not lead anywhere since it provides exactly what is expected of it. Real freedom is self-limiting and disciplined. Reaching for a higher goal always requires that you put a rein on your freedom. For example, it takes immense self-control, discipline, the rejection of your desires and voluntary limitation of your freedom if you want to pass an exam or earn a degree. The same principle is true for relationships. You have to work hard, give up your freedom to do whatever you want and whenever you want to do it and give up even your freedom to establish a relationship with another person if you want your relationship to be happy, balanced and intimate.

The limit to freedom #3: we need to limit our freedom to give love

If you are in love, you cannot be free, because out of love for the other person you will voluntarily limit your own freedom. True love is not looking for ways to spend as little time as possible with the other person, or to relate and connect to them in a meaningless manner, or to reveal as little of

themselves as possible. True love seeks exclusivity and commitment, because it is only in commitment that it flourishes and blossoms. True love builds boundaries that serve to protect intimacy within the relationship while mutually respecting the boundaries and freedom of the other person.

Is cohabitation a solution for marriage problems?

It's sad to witness that instead of focusing on the core problem, people busy themselves dealing with a fake issue. An internal constraint, love drives two people to live together, to share their lives with each other and work on a common future. Irresistible biological, psychological, social, emotional and economic forces prompt people to move into this direction. Soon they will realize that relationships are coupled with conflicts, and unresolved problems lead to the breakdown of the relationship. Instead of realizing the core issue, they will attack and dismantle the setting that regulates and protects their covenant. It is much easier to attack the environment and the external structure than face your internal weaknesses and deficiencies that have led to the failure of the relationship. This self-confrontation would be too painful, it would require much work and it would deprive people from the happy option of blaming external forces for the failure of their relationship: "The institution of marriage is outdated, flawed, therefore we need new systems and solutions." But do these new systems offer real help? Do they solve the real problem? Let's look at the facts.

Most cohabiting couples will most likely never get married, or if they do, there is a greater risk of divorce among them.

It is estimated that about half of the cohabiting couples do not even consider getting married. Another false argument is that during cohabitation the couple gets to know each other better, therefore they are less likely to get divorced. Cohabiting couples have about 33% higher chance of getting divorced than those who didn't live together before marriage. Research suggests that the longer these young people live together before getting married, the higher the chances are that they will get divorced. When two people opt to cohabit and not get married it could be because one of them might be afraid that their love will not last, and this way they want to keep their escape route open should the relationship turn sour. "Cohabitation is usually the postponing of the final decision," says Dr. Joseph Norwinski, a psychologist. *"Hungarian and international research shows that cohabitation is less stable than marriage, and it does not provide the same level of security for children as marriage does."*¹

A breakup can be just as painful as divorce.

Even if you don't get married you cannot protect yourself from emotional pain. It can be just as painful emotionally to break up a relationship as going through divorce. According to hospital psychologist Michael Newcomb, *"The emotional attachment of cohabiting people is usually similar to that of married couples. The problem is that they can distance themselves from each other even on insignificant issues, since they are not really bound by anything: children, shared wealth, publicly declared marriage oaths or the marriage certificate."*²

¹Joseph Norwinski, "Párok és gyerekek házasságon kívül = Couples and Children Not in Marriage Relationships," Magyar Hírlap, 9 October 1997; Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 1997.

²Michael D. Newcomb, "Cohabitation, Marriage and Divorce among Adolescents and Young Adults," Journal of Social and Personal Relationships 3, 4 (Dec 1986): 473-94.

If a woman gets pregnant, there are higher chances that the man will abandon her.

There is a high percentage of men who sooner or later will leave their unmarried partner if she gets pregnant. About 40 percent of teenage mothers live in deep poverty. Based on research above conducted in 1997 by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 30% of cohabiting mothers were abandoned by their partners after birth. Approximately 70% of the interviewed mothers had lived together permanently (for about 3-4 years) with the father prior to the birth of their child.

Practice before marriage does not ensure compatibility.

Couples who lived together earlier often find themselves miserable after they get married. They are typically dissatisfied with their partners and they cannot solve their conflicts. Women who cohabited before marriage complained that they are facing growing problems, especially in communicating with their spouses. It means that practice before marriage does not ensure compatibility. Commitment towards communication is weaker in these relationships than in marriage, and they fear—even if very vaguely—that their partner will leave them if they do not live up to their expectations. Their resulting fear will make them put up with things from their partner that they should not accept. According to surveys, more than one in three women are forced to have a sexual life that is against their will. Moreover, since cohabiting partners do not necessarily enter into intimate relationships only with their partner, there is a higher risk of sexually transmitted infections among them.

Cohabiting couples must face problems that arise also in marriage, but they cannot reap the benefits of marriage.

Cohabitation is often depicted as unproblematic, as if it offered only the benefits of marriage, but without the obligations. If you are not married and you are caught up in an argument, you don't necessarily have to work on a solution, you can simply move on. While this is an option available also in marriage, it is a far more complex situation, therefore most partners will seek to restore their relationship.

A fundamental condition for intimacy is security

Intimacy means that you can be real in the relationship; you can reveal who you are and know that the other person accepts you and is committed to you throughout a lifetime, irrespective of your condition. Without this security there is no intimacy, no reality, only an obligation to perform and to present the expected image. These two people need an environment that enables them to communicate, which can be found in a mutually faithful, exclusive and lifelong commitment called marriage. Marriage is a covenant that provides appropriate security for the partners. Only in those marriages which have been entered into at the right time with the right partner, will the partners be able to communicate with each other and solve their problems. A good marriage means acceptance and affection for the spouses that they can get from no other relationship. Marriage provides security and a guarantee which is represented by the public oath and a certificate that is approved by society. It signifies that you belong to your spouse, it expresses your love, affection and total commitment that you are prepared to persevere and stand by their side. Real love is ready to take this commitment. Real love does not seek a frivolous attachment, but it wants to be connected to the other person exclusively and at all costs. Real love seeks full commitment, because it wants intimacy; it wants to give everything and get everything: an emotional, physical, economic and social commitment.

If what you want is cohabitation without the commitment of marriage, then you don't dare to fully take responsibility for this person with all the consequences. The commitment expressed by marriage provides that accepting environment in which you can build a fully transparent, honest and loving relationship. Marriage is a fundamental condition to such a relationship. The foundations will be missing for establishing a deep, intimate and long-term relationship without security, commitment, legal commitment, social recognition and financial responsibility that is undertaken for the other person. People often argue that 'it's only a piece of paper; it does not matter anyway.' If it really doesn't matter, then why don't you get it and use it to strengthen your relationship? Well, in fact, a marriage certificate does matter a lot. This is why people are afraid to take this commitment, because they want to maintain an escape route to make their exit from the relationship easier. They take responsibility for the other person in front of each other and the entire society only to a limited extent. But this full commitment is necessary, not only for the couple, but also for their children. Children need safety and long-term commitment to perform their very best. Children can feel even the slightest uncertainty in the relationship between their parents. Marriage can ensure the social attachment that provides both financial and physical protection for a child.

The cornerstones of an intimate marriage

All valuable things come at a cost. The more valuable a thing is that you want to acquire, the harder you have to fight for it and be conscious and disciplined in your actions. People still tend to think that the most valuable things in life, which mostly determine your quality of life, (i.e., relationships, especially intimate partnership) will somehow work out all by themselves.

The secret to a happy and intimate relationship can be found with people, since happy and balanced people usually live in happy and balanced relationships. The key to marriage is not to change the other person, but to change yourself.

Newlyweds usually enter into marriage with false expectations and ideas. They think too much of themselves and expect too much from their spouse. They are unaware of the important fact that they are gullible and they can make mistakes themselves. We are all full of weaknesses, defects, handicaps and bad habits. You can easily develop an expectation that the other person is perfect, beautiful, smart and better than the average. It is only after a few weeks or months that such people confront reality. That is why almost half of failed marriages break down in the first two years. How can this be prevented? How can you avoid disappointment? How can you prepare for marriage by developing some indispensable qualities? These are the questions that will be examined below.

First of all, it's worthwhile to look at an ancient wisdom that has defined the framework for marriage for thousands of years. It ensured the survival of societies for many centuries and it enables us to live today. This ancient wisdom goes back to the earliest recorded memory of how marriage is birthed. You read the following: *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall be one flesh."*³

1. Leave

One of the preconditions for marriage is leaving your parents. It doesn't mean letting them down, but it is more of a healthy separation. Each member of the couple must be capable of making decisions and living an independent life before getting married. Leaving does not equal a geographical

³Genesis 2:24.

move; it should primarily be interpreted as becoming emotionally independent and having your own will. Emotional independence and your own will are required. Young people must learn to become independent, standing their ground against different challenges, problems and difficulties. You need to be able to take care of yourself. You may want to accept help from your parents, but you should not allow emotional blackmailing, financial dependence or opposition with your spouse to develop. Parents are to be loved and respected, without any question. But the point of leaving them is that from the moment of entering into marriage, your spouse becomes the most important person to you in the whole world.

If you want to prepare for this separation, you may want to start loving and accepting people irrespective of what they are like and what they did to make us love them. This is a skill greatly needed in marriage. Another quality that should be developed before marriage is the ability to make decisions and be intentional. You are responsible for your spouse. You have to learn to make decisions and solve problems. If you enter into marriage without being able to understand situations or make decisions, you can anticipate a lot of failures and disappointments later on. In marriage, there are a number of situations where you have to be decisive and know what you want to achieve. You have to learn how to plan, create a budget and take responsibility for your decisions. Many marriages fail because the husband remains 'Mom's favorite' and cannot act as a grown-up man. Arguments between mothers and daughters-in-law are a typical reason for the failure of marriages.

2. Cleave

To cleave to each other is a fairly foreign notion in our age. It supposes that there is exclusivity and lifelong fidelity in the relationship. If you cleave to something you protect, nurture and care for it. If your car is important to you, you drive it carefully, not racing around with it. It means that you stick to your partner even when it is uncomfortable. In fact, this is when this clinging is particularly needed. Cleaving is a final, public and legal commitment to each other.

You declare to the public and before the law that you belong to your partner for good. If you have real affection for each other, it is impossible to separate this bond without damage or painful consequences. If you want to separate two pieces of paper that were glued together, the paper itself will tear. Cleaving means commitment, fidelity, perseverance and dedication. Commitment means that you stick to the other person even when you have no benefit from it, when it actually takes a sacrifice from you. These are characteristics that marriages nowadays are deeply lacking.

If you want a good marriage, work to develop these qualities. Show commitment, loyalty, perseverance and dedication to your friends and in your work. Stick to people even when others have already given up on them. Make sacrifices for people even if you gain nothing out of it.

3. Becoming one flesh

The third pillar of marriage is the physical expression of unity. Even though it is an essential part of it, becoming one flesh doesn't only mean a sexual relationship; but sexuality also expresses emotional, intellectual and spiritual community. In preparation for marriage, practicing sexual intercourse is not the biggest issue. It can be easily learned. However, the precondition for this is harmony on all the previously listed areas. This can only be achieved by learning how to communicate with each other. Communication or the lack of it is probably the most vulnerable part of a marriage.

Communication plays a very important role in relationships. Most people are incapable of expressing their thoughts, opinions and feelings. Effective communication is transparent, where you

are not afraid to reveal your real self. Many people cannot communicate this way. They are unable to express their feelings and feel ashamed of crying or rejoicing. Many people actually think that expressing your emotions is a sign of weakness; but weak people are the ones cover up or conceal their emotions, not those who express them. If you dare to show your feelings, you proclaim that you dare to reveal who you are. Then your self-image is not determined by the opinion of others. You dare to open up, because you are not subject to the judgment of others. Only honest and unconditional love can open the channels of communication. The basic criterion for marriage is this type of communication, the transparent revealing of your feelings, thoughts and opinions.

If you want to enter marriage as a mature person, you must first learn to speak about your emotions, to express your feelings, thoughts and opinions in words. You must be able to communicate even when you would rather shut the door behind you or would withdraw because you are hurt. You must be able to express your appreciation, speak kindly and encourage and praise your spouse. It's an excellent opportunity if you start practicing this open and conscious communication already with your friends. Say something positive to a person who is not very dear to you. It's a difficult task, but this is the sacrifice that will bear fruit in your marriage later.

The three types of love

It's difficult to define what true love is like. Love is more than passion and feelings, which is why throwing around *"I love you"* or *"I'm in love with you"* are not the most obvious choices to express it. Let's examine the different types of love that you can see in human relationships, along with the characteristics of true love. While reading about them, examine how they are present in your own relationships.

1. 'I'll love you, IF....'

The first type of love is the 'I'll love you, if....'. This kind of love is received or given when certain requirements are met. You must earn it somehow. For example: 'Daddy will love you if you're a good boy' or 'I will love you if you meet my requirements for a lover....', 'if you satisfy my desires....' or 'if you sleep with me.' This kind of love is offered in exchange for things, actions, feelings desired by the other party. Ultimately, this type of love is selfish. Its objective is to get something in exchange for love. This type of love is always subject to conditions. All is well until the conditions are met. As soon as there is some reluctance, love immediately subsides. Sadly, this conditional love almost always destroys itself, because sooner or later the partner will not be able to meet the expectations of the other person. Many marriages fall apart because they are built on this type of love. It turns out that the husband or the wife is not in love with their real spouse, but they are attracted to some imaginary, romantic image of the other person who is perfect in their own mind.

2. 'I love you, BECAUSE....'

The second type of love is 'I love you, because....'. In this case the person is loved because they have or did something. It is caused by a particular condition or quality that is present in the beloved. For example: 'I love you, because you are pretty' or 'I love you, because I feel safe by your side.' Maybe you know girls who are in love with a guy only because they are sporty and good-looking. It's not the guy they love, but his status, position and popularity. If you are loved this way, soon you will have to work hard to earn the 'I'll love you, if' type of appreciation. What happens if someone possesses more of the same features or characteristics that you are loved for? People who experience this type of love

are afraid that their partner will find out what they are really like deep in their hearts. They fear that if the truth is revealed, their partner will accept and love them less or maybe they would even be fully rejected. If there is uncertainty or fear in love, it will manifest itself first in bed, because sexuality is the ultimate expression of vulnerability.

3. 'I love you. PERIOD.'

There is also a third type of love. It's so shocking and beautiful that everyone should experience it. It says that 'I love you no matter what you are like deep inside. I love you and I don't care if you change. You can't do anything that would quench my love for you. I love you. PERIOD.' This type of love is not blind. It may know a whole lot about the other person. And despite the fact that you know their weaknesses and mistakes, you accept them as they are. This kind of love can be experienced only by someone who is whole and full; by someone who doesn't have to constantly take away from their relationships to tuck into the holes of their own deficiencies. A person who is whole can freely give in a relationship without requesting anything in return. This is a 'giver' type of love. It gives freely of itself. In this relationship there is no room for fear, disappointment, force, envy or jealousy. This type of love will bring about changes in the other person. No one demands such changes, they are a natural response for unconditional love. There is freedom from meeting any expectations, which prompts you to give something in return for being totally accepted. This type of love frees you from pressure; it frees you to get the best out of yourself.

The characteristics of 'I love you, PERIOD'

This kind of love is characterized by three qualities: forgiveness, commitment and acceptance.

Forgiveness brings hope to the relationship. We all struggle with different weaknesses, faults and wrongdoing. Inevitably, we hurt each other. Forgiveness gives you hope that the other person will accept and carry your weaknesses; they will turn an eye away from our mistakes and that they will forgive your sins. Forgiveness is not critical, rather it always offers a fresh start. Forgiveness seeks the benefit of the other person even when they don't deserve it.

Commitment is a decision that you accept the other person, together with their faults. This is the fruit of your will, a decision of your senses. Commitment is subjecting your emotions to your will when these emotions become uncertain or clouded. It means long-term perseverance and full dedication towards the other person in front of the whole society. It's a manifestation of grace that fills the relationship with hope. It makes your relationship safe and secure because both parties can rely on each other, no matter what happens. True love is incomplete without this commitment, because only the 'I love you, period' type of love expresses that you committed yourself to persevere and stand by the other person, irrespective of what happens and what changes might come.

Acceptance enables you to give your best performance. Love does not mean that you disregard the problems, but that you are set to resolve them. These conflicts usually stem from different demands and expectations and the clash between them. If you accept the other person and love them as they are, you place them before yourself. Ultimately, it will prompt them to perform their very best. People who live in an environment of acceptance are capable of accomplishing more.

In closing, let's look at some practical suggestions on how to prepare for marriage while you are still dating.

Dating

Dating is a good thing, but it can also be very confusing. The purpose of dating is for a boy and a girl to get to know each other as part of a deepening friendship. As they get to know each other better, it can lead them to a deeper commitment or, to the contrary, a decision to break up.

We all have an idea of Mr. or Mrs. Right. You might even have an image of them on your wall. You probably know exactly what you want from them, and you also have clear ideas about how they should behave. The problem begins when reality doesn't match this image. A perfect partner is generally defined by three categories: looks, personality and popularity.

There is something missing from this 'triplet.' It's the most important category of all—character. Your character is your inner essence, your true being. You might be dating someone with perfect looks, but if they have a weak character the relationship will break down very soon. Beauty fades with age, but character remains forever. Many people think that it's worth making compromises about inner characteristics for the sake of external features (beauty or popularity). These people believe that their partner will change over time, only to wake up one day to realize that external looks don't matter that much and neither does popularity. They will come to see their partner for who they really are. We are not saying that external characteristics don't matter. Obviously, you want to date someone who looks attractive to you. The question is how you can get to know someone's character.

Positive character traits.⁴

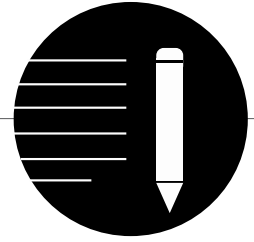
1. Love means commitment to the other person.
2. Joy, an inner happiness that is independent of the conditions.
3. Peace, an inner sense of security that enables you to stay calm, even in the midst of difficult circumstances, without fear and worry, because you trust that your life is safe in God's hands.
4. Patience that enables you to wait for the right time.
5. Kindness when you care about the needs of others.
6. Goodness to do what is right.
7. Faithfulness when you keep your word, irrespective of what it costs you.
8. Gentleness when you focus on the emotional needs of others by paying attention and trying to understand them.
9. Self-control. It means that you can separate your instincts from your actions. You don't serve your instincts, but you are morally and mentally strong. This is reflected in the person's eating habits and practical life. This is the ability to rule over your physical desires, sex included.

These are the positive traits that can make you happy if your partner possesses them. Such traits are not linked to the 'triplets,' but they remain for a whole lifetime.

Marriage is the best framework that keeps the lifelong love commitment of a man and a woman safe, regardless how their looks, performance or positions change throughout their lives.

⁴The list was compiled based on Galatians 5:16-23. See Barry St. Clair and Bill Jones, *Dating: Going Out in Style* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993); Josh McDowell and Paul Lewis, *Givers, Takers and Other Kinds of Lovers* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 1980); and Lawrence J. Crabb, *The Marriage Builder* (Carol Stream, IL: NavPress, 1982).

LESSON PLAN



06.

Intimate relationships
The Beauty of Love

Lifelong Commitment

Lesson Plan

Understanding each other

Group exercise

How to break up

Matching purposes to
consequences

Planning for
commitment

The Purpose of the Lesson

By the end of this lesson, your students should be able to understand the way the opposite sex thinks, what it means to find your life-long partner, and have started mapping out their own path in this process, understanding that sometimes it is best to end the relationship.

1. Understanding each other

10

You will need to separate the groups enough so that other groups cannot hear their discussions.

Watch the time. This activity can easily carry away the session time, so unless you can add more sessions to cover the second half of this lesson, keep your students working quickly.

Have them talk with each other in their groups and write down what they hear. They can change reporters if necessary at this time.

While the students think and talk, write a column for the girls on one side of the whiteboard and a column for the boys on the other side. Make sure you leave room between columns to hang the paper list the students already created.

Beginning the lesson

The next few years can be a wonderful time of learning about yourself, of learning how to have friends and how to be a friend. It can also be a time when you begin to discover what you may need and want in a life partner and to grow in your ability to be the kind of person who can make a successful lifelong commitment.

[Ask students to divide into four different groups, two with boys and two with girls. Tell them they will have only two minutes to respond to the questions on the pieces of paper you will hand out to them. Choose a student in each group to record their responses to the questions on their paper:

The questions are:

1. What do you really want from a boy/girl you like?
2. What qualities do you look for in a boy/girl?

After five minutes collect the paper from each group. Do not let the groups see each other's papers.]

Collecting the answers.

TEACHER: You can say something like the following—

I'd like to see how much you know about how members of the opposite sex view the road to a lifelong commitment, so I want you to decide together and tell me your guesses of how members of the opposite sex answered the questions. Girls, you have three minutes to guess how the boys in this class answered their questions. Boys, you have three minutes to guess how the girls in this class answered their questions.

[After three minutes, call time, and ask the group reporters to give you their group's guesses about how the opposite gender answered the questions. Read the girls' guesses for questions one and two and record them on the whiteboard as pictured above; then place the boys' piece of paper on the whiteboard beside the girls' guesses. Circle those items that are different for each question.]

[Ask for comments on matches and surprises.]

[Secondly, read the boys' guesses for questions one and two and immediately place the girls' piece of paper on the board next to the boys' guesses. Again, circle the items on each list which are different.]

2. Group exercise

15

Put students into groups of three. Illustrate some of these proverbs by drawing a triangle, and label the base, "Start with many friends." Label the top, "One partner for life."

Place an age at the top of the triangle when getting married is accepted by one's parents and family. Discuss whether or not the attaining of this age makes a person ready for a life-long commitment or not. (Note that there is more to being ready for this step than simply reaching a specific age. Also note that this is what makes the lessons learned while in process so important.)

Let's think a little more about traveling down the road to a lifelong commitment to one person. You have space to take notes on your Student Notes.

We define this road to a lifelong commitment simply as how you get from where you are now to the point where you are ready to be married.

I know that some of you are highly interested in this topic and that others would rather not talk about it. We are talking about it in this class because being prepared is always better than being surprised.

For the next few minutes, I'd like you to sit together and work in groups of three boys or three girls.

I'm going to read you some proverbs, and I'd like you to decide together if each of these proverbs is worth writing down to teach a little brother, sister, cousin or friend.

- Use your adolescent years to find out who you are and what you want in life.
- The more you become acquainted with different people, the better your likelihood of choosing a great mate.
- The more healthy relationships you have, the greater the opportunities for learning what character qualities you want in a future mate.
- The road to finding a best friend who will become your partner for life is filled with healthy friendships.
- Healthy friendships teach us what qualities we will eventually want in a marriage partner.
- An intense desire to find a marriage partner as soon as possible usually results in a poor choice and a painful marriage.
- Flee the person who tries to push a relationship into intimacy and exclusiveness too quickly, especially someone who pushes for sexual activity.

3. How to break up?

10

Brainstorming

Most people do not marry the first person they are interested in, so the successful road to a happy marriage often involves the decision not to marry a particular person. In many cultures, serious relationships often end in

Question for older students: If you ever had a relationship that was moving toward a lifelong commitment in your opinion and you ended it, how did you do that?

separation (“break-up”), rather than marriage. Painful as this decision usually is, it is less painful than marrying someone and regretting it. Deciding not to marry is also far less painful than divorce.

Gather in groups (boys with boys, girls with girls) not larger than five. Next, quickly choose a group leader and a recorder. Make sure the recorder has paper and pen.

Now let’s see how many reasons you can think of for “breaking-up” or ending a relationship that was on the road towards a lifelong commitment. You have two minutes to think together. The group with the most valid reasons wins.

[After two minutes call time and ask each recorder to read what their group discussed. Then add the following:]

“Breaking-up” or terminating a serious relationship is usually thought of as a very negative thing. Some see it as a tragedy to be avoided at all costs. It usually hurts—especially if you are not the one who initiated the break-up. You experience rejection.

Consider how many marital heartaches, divorces or abusive relationships might have been avoided if people had the freedom and courage to stop a relationship they sensed was not really right for them. You need to know that it is okay to end a serious relationship.

Breaking up a close male/female relationship is the very best choice we can make when we discover that the other person does not have the qualities we want in a future life partner.

With a little practice, you can become skilled at managing the amount of closeness in your friendships so that you can keep many friends and not get inappropriately attached to someone.

Here is one key to remember, “Your lifelong partner won’t meet all of your needs!” In fact, most relationships are developed with the idea that they will have needs met that in reality can only be met as one develops the spiritual part of their lives.

[In the next exercise we will begin to see what can be learned while traveling the road towards a lifelong commitment.]

4. Matching purposes to consequences

5

On your Student Notes there is a list of purposes and consequences for developing healthy relationships on the road toward a lifelong relationship. The purposes are listed in the left column and the consequences are listed on the right. Draw lines connecting the purposes to their consequences.

If your students don't have Student Notes, you might print the Matching Exercise on the whiteboard.

[Give your students two minutes to match, then dictate the key to them one number at a time. Take two to three minutes to respond to any questions they have, clarifying any confusion.]

5. Planning for commitment

5

Question:
Would you want your little brother or sister to experience the road to a lifelong commitment the way you have thus far?
What relationship have you experienced between responsibility and trust?
Are you involved in a male/female relationship because of peer pressure? (Don't answer this question out loud).

Developing relationships with a person of the opposite sex that leads to a lifelong commitment takes many forms in different cultures, but its primary function culminates in marriage.

You may not have thought about a plan for traveling the road toward a lifelong commitment, but you will have a tremendous advantage if you build a plan. A good plan will:

- increase the probability that you keep or develop a greater sense of personal freedom;
- decrease the likelihood that you will become the victim of someone else's pressures;
- increase the likelihood of reaching the purposes and experiencing the consequences you just matched; and
- decrease the risk of getting STIs.

Elements of a good plan

The person you will marry is most likely alive and living somewhere at this time, and you probably haven't even met them yet. Let's assume that your future husband or wife is spending time right now with another person of the opposite sex.

- What are some rules you hope will guide them in their relationship?

[Have students list several and write them on the whiteboard. After several are mentioned, ask the students which ones they think they should personally practice in their relationship with the opposite sex. If there is a difference, ask them why they would want to allow something into their relationship with a member of the opposite sex now that they don't want their future life-long partner to have in their relationship with the opposite sex.]

[Then suggest the following items as elements of a good plan and have students comment on what makes these important to them.]

1. Begin by just making friendships.
2. Avoid spending a lot of time together alone, particularly if you are in a serious relationship.
3. You really can build a great relationship with someone in the presence of others. It is healthier as it helps to keep you from compromising your own rules and values.
4. Be responsible for yourself by setting limits on your behavior.
5. Demonstrate to your parents and peers that you are able to wisely manage this area of your life.
6. Avoid or escape situations in which the appeal is to gratify any strong desire or impulse, such as the use of drugs and alcohol or sex.
7. Practice communication skills that do not depend on physical touch. Expressing your feelings in only physical ways can actually build barriers to communication and hinder or destroy the relationship you had hoped to build.
8. Remember, the only place where sexual involvement is really safe is in marriage.

STUDENT NOTES



Lifelong Commitment

Match purposes to consequences:

Purposes

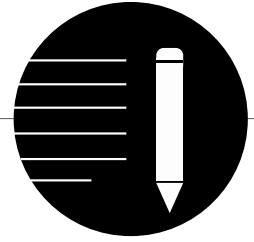
1. To know a wide number of people
2. To develop a sense of independence
3. To spend time with a person who chooses to spend time with you
4. To discover characteristics of the opposite sex
5. To get to know different types of people

Consequences

- A. Learning more about yourself
- B. Provides opportunities for taking responsibility
- C. Finding the type of person with whom a lasting relationship in marriage is possible
- D. Feeling more at ease with a male – female relationship
- E. You experience acceptance

Answer key: 1-C, 2-B, 3-E, 4-D, 5-A

LESSON PLAN



07.

Intimate relationships
The Beauty of Love

Creative Dating Ideas

Lesson Plan

Date Ideas
Helpful Questions

Please feel free to copy the
“Date ideas” and “Helpful
questions” to hand out to your
students.

The Purpose of the Lesson

By the end of this lesson your students will learn practical suggestions and ideas that can be helpful in discussing the topic of dating. Students will be given tangible ideas of how to go about dating members of the opposite sex in an appropriate and worthwhile manner.

Lay down the ground rules

Before beginning to date someone, think through what it is you expect from a dating relationship. You also need to decide what behavior is acceptable to you in a dating relationship. How far is too far for you? *Do you want to avoid all physical contact?* Make sure that you think this through and know exactly where your limit is; you may even want to write it down for yourself. In regard to the moral limits you set for yourself on a date, it is helpful to have a friend keep you accountable. If you do not decide ahead of time how far you want to go physically, it is easy to slip into a situation that you really do not want. If you have decided beforehand what activities are and are not appropriate for you and for which you are willing to assume full responsibility, with a clear conscience you will know what to do when passions get hot and you start to lose your head. Please consider telling your date what your limits are. This way he or she will know what to expect. We should also add here that you should be prepared for unexpected situations and should learn how to say “no” with confidence and conviction.

Plan your date

Have an exact plan for what you will be doing, where you will be, when you will be home and how much the date will cost. (There is a list of suggested activities following this section.) If you have no plan, you can easily find yourselves being bored and in an unintended tempting situation where because you cannot think of anything else to do together, it could lead to sex. Try to avoid being alone in an empty home.

Date ideas

Sport date:

Tennis, football game, basketball game, swimming, horseback riding, pool, bicycling, skiing, jogging, table tennis, badminton, running

- Advantages: fun, healthy, others can participate with you
- Disadvantages: your date may not be interested in sports; your self-confidence could be undermined if your partner defeats you; one of you may be overly competitive and then the game will be no fun for anyone.

Low cost date:

Go together to the library and read to each other from your favorite books, eat ice cream, go out for a coke and a chat, take a walk in the park, play video games, go to the beach, play board games, put together a jigsaw puzzle, play the guitar or some other instrument, paint a picture together, take photos, make popcorn and talk, sing songs, play your favorite popular songs for each other, make a snowman.

Arts date:

Attend opera, ballet, musical, museum, arts festivals, concerts, theater or cinema showings, go dancing (perhaps there are student rates or free offers—always check for great deals).

Serving date:

Visit orphanages, sick people, hospitals, or homes for the handicapped and encourage those who are there. Help people that struggle to get out by doing their grocery shopping for the week, walking their dog, helping with their housework, doing odd jobs around their home, gardening, taking out their trash, clearing their sidewalk of snow.

Food date:

Have a meal with your friends where everyone brings something, cook a meal together, cook for each other, make a cake together for someone else, have a picnic, go to a restaurant.

What do I do first?

Now that you have some options of what you could do, what is the next step? Here are some practical ideas that might help you decide.

1. Choose an activity that the other person likes.
2. Determine how much you can spend during the date. This usually restricts the choices. Spend your money wisely; the best dates don't always cost the most.
3. Plan the date so that you can spend as much time as possible in talking to each other. Conversation helps grow the relationship, which is one of the purposes of dating.
4. Try to avoid doing the same thing every time you go out on a date together.

5. Occasionally involve other people, too. Group dates relieve you from the pressure of not knowing what to do or talk about.
6. Avoid “sticky” situations. Steer clear of people or situations that can lead you into temptation, like certain films, games or locations.

Helpful questions

The following questions can help you in preparing for a date and also in carrying on a conversation that will help you get to know the other person better. These questions can be used not only in a dating relationship, but in any situation where you are trying to get to know someone better.

Questions to ask yourself:

- What is your purpose in dating?
- How will you handle any differences that come up between you?
- What are the moral boundaries you have set for yourself?
- What topics do you want to talk about which could make the conversation interesting?
- While you are preparing for a date, are you only thinking about what to wear and what you look like or are you also thinking about how to put the other person’s needs first?

Character questions to ask yourself about your date:

- Has the person you are dating ever been sexually active?
- Does your partner make off-color remarks and mention sex often?
- Are they tolerant of others or do they hate certain people or people groups?
- Do they encourage you to spend time with your friends or do they try to keep you all to themselves?
- Are they patient or do they get angry easily?
- Are they uncomplaining or do they argue a lot?
- Do they drink alcohol excessively or use illegal drugs?
- Are they self-centered or do they put others before themselves?
- Do they encourage you to “break all the rules” or abide by them?
- Do they motivate you to disobey or follow your parents’ advice?
- Do they help others or avoid those in need?
- Do they carry out their responsibilities?
- Do they try to understand you or are they more interested in talking about themselves?
- Do they exhibit self-control in eating and other desires?

Things worth finding out about your partner before dating:

- What kind of character do they have?
- Who are their closest friends?
- What are they interested in?
- What is their family like?
- What are their likes and dislikes?
- What do they think is funny?

Some suggested topics of conversation

- What school activities do they participate in? (Dance, choir, music, student organizations, sports)
- Which subjects in school most interest them?
- What are their hobbies?
- Who are their heroes? If they could be anyone in history, who would they choose and why?
- Where would they like to travel if they could go anywhere in the world?
- Do they like pets?
- What would be their ideal job?
- What is their most significant memory from childhood?
- Which relative do they like the best and why?
- Where would they like to live and why?



IV.

Intimate relationships The Beauty of Love

True Intimacy

The building blocks for trust and commitment

Being in an intimate and close relationship means that you are real and can be your true self. **You can be your true self only if you experience trust and commitment from the other person.** Trust and commitment break down the walls that you have built to protect yourself from hurt and to conceal who you really are. Trust and commitment help you open up to experience healing and real intimacy.

A true understanding of intimacy will have a positive effect on a person's character. The process begins in infancy when our basic needs for trust and security are met. These lead to the confidence necessary for a child to develop independence. This sense of autonomy provides the self-assurance needed to be able to initiate and build relationships. Through the

affirmative experiences associated with initiating relationships, our self-identity and self-perception are positively influenced.

An accurate and confident sense of self-worth also leads to true intimacy. Intimacy in turn leads to generosity, the fruit of which is a character of integrity.

Another vital element in fostering intimate relationships is trust. It is important for us to understand how essential trust is in our lives and how trust expressed to one another can influence us in a positive direction. A child who grows up with a lack of trust will be unable to reach his full potential.

According to psychologist Eric Erikson, *"The most basic building block needed for our development is trust."*¹ We need to recognize our need for others and be able to trust others in order to be healthy adults. This trust begins to develop the moment we are born.

When a child comes into the world, the baby is totally dependent on those around him. The parents care for all the child's needs. In this position of being cared for in the midst of vulnerability, a sense of trust begins to build in the child. The development of this trust is greatly influenced by the contact between mother and child. Beyond the health benefits of breastfeeding (a very natural and traditional part of life throughout the world today), there are psychological and emotional benefits. During breastfeeding, the child experiences a closeness and intimacy with his mother, which provides a foundation for trust to develop throughout life.

Independence or a sense of autonomy grows out of this trust. Grounded in a sense of security, a child is capable of acting with his own independent feelings, opinions and will, without any doubts or fear of the outcome. The trust between a child and a parent gives the child the boldness to act as an individual and to occasionally express opposing opinions.

Children who develop trust-based autonomy are able to take the initiative in relationships. They have a sense of confidence and worth which enable them to approach others without fear. Those who grow up without trust and do not develop a sense of autonomy are incapable of establishing relationships by taking the initiative.

Autonomy is the characteristic that enables us to step into relationships as equals. The lack of this quality leads to feelings of inferiority and embarrassment of who and what we are. A sense of autonomy in the way we think, make decisions, evaluate circumstances and problems gives us confidence to express our thoughts and opinions to others.

Autonomous people know they are valuable and have a worthwhile contribution to make, one in which others would naturally be interested. This sense of autonomy also enables us to take the initiative in relationships.

People who are not grounded in trust that has developed into autonomy may have negative self-perceptions. Someone with a negative self-perception will, sooner or later, blame themselves for their inability to make friends by thinking things like: *"I can't make friends because I'm worthless."* *"I'm not important to anyone else, there is nothing interesting about me."* *"I can't be loved."*

Without an accurate self-image, we become insecure and ashamed of who we are. We think of ourselves as worthless and inconsequential and we find ourselves incapable of experiencing a truly intimate relationship. As we will see, the requirements for experiencing true intimacy are to share ourselves without shame or fear of the consequences. Those dependent on opinions of others to

¹Eric Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 1st ed. (New York: Norton, 1950).

feel good about themselves are unable to give themselves fully in a relationship because they are afraid. However, those with a proper self-image, based on confidence, trust and autonomy, can give themselves to others and begin the process towards intimate relationships.

True intimacy leads to openhandedness. The giving person has no need to supplement (by his petty, selfish attempts) the needs that can only be met within an intimate relationship. Those who are not experiencing true intimacy will try to gain the fulfillment provided by intimacy in some other manner such as deception, cheating on their spouse or intensely pursuing financial gains. When someone arrives at this stage, they are even willing to do disreputable things just to have these needs met.

When we are in a sincerely intimate relationship with another person, we can find a satisfying degree of being known and accepted by someone just as we are. This sets us free to be open with those around us. The experience of true intimacy leads to openness and integrity.

Intimacy does not equal sex

It is easy to deceive ourselves into trying to obtain intimacy in a false way. One form of false intimacy can be promiscuous sex. According to a survey, one of the top reasons teenagers get involved in sexual relationships is that they want to experience love, care and intimacy. Many people in society today are involved in sexual relationships because they lack the fulfillment of a truly intimate relationship. In a committed married relationship, true intimacy is first experienced on an emotional level. The sexual act in a marriage relationship is really an overflow of the emotional intimacy experienced by the couple. Emotional intimacy means we recognize and understand our own feelings and then share these feelings with our spouse. It means being completely vulnerable with one another without fear of rejection. A prerequisite to this form of intimacy is that we feel secure within ourselves. If we are incapable of being vulnerable or won't allow our spouse to be vulnerable, we can stifle the experience of intimacy in marriage. The result of this will be that our soul does not experience intimacy, and we will be forced to try and fulfill this need through our bodies or five senses. We will talk about this later when we discuss false intimacy in more detail.

Fears that hinder the development of intimate relationships

In the course of the introduction we saw how true intimacy develops in an atmosphere of trust and how this affects a person's character. Furthermore, we examined the false expectation that sex provides true intimacy. We should also be aware of two fears that can most hinder us from experiencing an intimate relationship. Understanding these fears will help us overcome them. As we examine this topic we will see that these fears have a close relationship to our self-concept.

The two basic fears each of us wrestle with are: No one will ever love me and I will never be able to love another person.

1. No one will ever love me

Our first basic fear in a relationship with others is that they will neither like nor accept us. This fear stems from a lack of self-worth. *"They do not like me because I am not worth loving. If I had worth, if I counted, if there was something in me that was lovable, then they would like me."* It has been said that

no one can live without love. Everyone longs for love in one form or another. Many, caught in their fear that others will never like them for who they really are, try to earn this love by trading favors, actions or behaviors.

Others pretend to be something they are not just so they can hear the words, “I love you.” For example, many girls give up their moral standard and go to bed with boys in order to receive love and emotional security. People who feel this way about themselves are not satisfied with who they are; they do not consider themselves valuable or lovable.

It is impossible to experience a truly intimate relationship without the giving of ourselves. The person who considers himself worthless will not open up because he does not believe others will like who they see. If we are afraid of not being liked or accepted, this fear will hinder us from attaining the emotional experience of intimacy we so desperately seek. The awareness that we are a valuable being is rooted in the image we have developed of ourselves. If we consider ourselves of no value and we try to get people to love us by some other means—whether by deeds, accomplishments or false images of who we are—then the intimacy we find will not be real. This kind of intimate relationship is not based on who and what I am, but on what I do, how I draw attention to myself, or how I try to get love from others. Instead of giving myself, I give only a false performance.

To achieve real intimacy we need to overcome the fear that we are unlovable. We are, in fact, valuable and worthy of being known and loved.

2. I am incapable of loving others

The other fear that prevents us from reaching intimacy in our relationships is the feeling that we are incapable of loving others unconditionally. Since we live in a performance-oriented society, we are tempted to judge others on the basis of actions and behaviors. We generally love others on the basis of what they do for us or how they treat us. However, it is vital to experiencing intimacy that we learn to love others as they are, independent of what they do or how they behave.

Feeling insecure about whether we can love our partner enough can build up barriers inside us that will make it impossible for us to be completely vulnerable. On the other hand, if I accept my partner, faults and all, and that person feels the same about me, I will feel secure in our relationship and will be more likely to open up and boldly share even my innermost feelings. The fact is, it is possible to accept another individual despite their faults. It can be difficult. But, as we experience being loved and accepted and as this fosters a positive self image, we can find the strength and wisdom to love others unconditionally.

Self-image and intimacy

In the reading entitled, “*Am I Who Others Say I Am?*” we discovered the three pillars which are essential for a healthy self-image (sense of belonging, sense of worth and sense of significance). We have already talked about how the lack of self-worth affects intimacy. We saw that without a positive perception of our personal value, it is extremely difficult to be vulnerable because of the fear that the other person will not love and accept us. We also talked about the second pillar, the sense of significance, which is evident in people who are capable of loving and accepting others. We saw that the lack of a sense of significance has an extremely negative affect on our ability to develop intimate relationships.

The third pillar, the sense of belonging, is also a key element in experiencing intimacy. The sense of belonging means that there is someone who accepts and loves us, someone to whom we are important, someone who needs us and with whom we are secure. The fact that we belong to someone proves to us that we are valuable and important to that person. If we belong to someone, we gain their protection, care, safety and acceptance.

The question is where can we find this sense of belonging? Human relationships are too unstable and change too frequently to be able to insure the feeling of belonging for a whole lifetime. Only in a vital, personal relationship with the living God can we find the security, protection and sense of belonging we need as human beings. God has declared that He considers us valuable, thinks we are important and that we belong to Him.

False intimacy results when we try to fulfill emotional needs in the wrong way in the wrong place. False intimacy is when we respond to and try to satisfy emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs physically. The physical realm cannot fulfill these needs. Those who try to develop intimacy through sex, without first developing the social, emotional and spiritual areas of the relationship, will be disappointed.

They will experience a certain kind of intimacy for a brief period during the sexual act, but afterwards their emotional needs will continue to go unmet and unsatisfied. The sexual act itself is incapable of fulfilling all of a person's needs and insuring true intimacy. A person caught in this cycle tries sex again with another partner, hoping it will be better. The cycle just continues and the real need is never met.

True intimacy in a relationship is a result of trust. Generally this takes a long time. If sex enters into this process too early it can hinder trust and the development of commitment. Sex before commitment can easily destroy trust and kill intimacy. Trust develops over a lengthy period of time as a result of on-going communication and working through problems, as well as having fun together. During this time, two individuals get to know one another and see if they really want to be committed to each other or not.

This commitment, once expressed, is then sealed in marriage. This is the only situation in which a couple can be totally confident in each other because they know they have committed themselves to one another for life. If the foundation of true intimacy is trust, then true intimacy can only develop in the context of a committed relationship where trust is established. Trust guarantees an environment that fosters honesty and transparency where we can be who we really are and to reach our highest potential.

The role of communication in intimate relationships

The most important tool in getting to know one another is communication. It also plays an enormous role in the development of intimacy. Of course there are different levels of communication that are appropriate to the different levels of friendships we have with others. (For more details on levels of friendship and communication see the reading "*Friends for Life*.")

In this reading we will concentrate on one aspect of communication that is essential for the development of an intimate honest relationship—trust. When two people must continually assess each other to determine whether they are trustworthy, it creates distance and suspicion. They will not

be secure in each other's eyes and will therefore not be able to be vulnerable with each other. Trust provides the opportunity for a couple to communicate without fear.

In order to reflect trust to the person with whom we want to establish an intimate relationship, it is important to try to do the following:

- Clearly express what you would like to communicate through your words and deeds.
- Avoid gossip and offensive, hurtful outbursts.
- Be thoughtful and wise. When speaking, try to approach the subject from more than one angle.
- Commend and encourage the other person!
- Smile! Happy people attract friends.
- Express in words, as well as deeds, how much the other person means to you.
- If you become aware of one of the other person's shortcomings, gently mention it to them, all the while assuring them of your love and acceptance
- Talk about your feelings and thoughts. Don't be ashamed of them. Go beyond talking about what happened during the day.
- Talk about your beliefs and convictions.
- Ask, ask, ask; then listen to the answers! (Learn how to ask questions and make them interesting. Make a list of questions you would like to ask because you really want to know the answers.)
- In situations that are difficult, show sympathy and give practical help.
- Express your joy and respect.
- Never delay asking for forgiveness or apologizing. No one is perfect. If you get into a fight or you have a difference of opinion, you should always be ready to seek forgiveness first.

Communication can be difficult even with the best attitude. If the words you used or the way you used them were insensitive, unclear or insufficient to express what you had in mind, be patient because communication is hard. On the other hand, sometimes you appropriately and intelligently express exactly what is on your mind, but the other person misunderstands it. This makes communication very confusing. How can we overcome this barrier? The only way you can be sure that you are truly understood is to ask. Making sure the other person has an accurate understanding of what you are trying to say is essential to healthy communication.

Here are some tips for effective communication:

- Be yourself. Do not try to appear to be someone you are not. If you are tense the other person will also become tense. When this happens, the conversation becomes tense!
- Do not let your mind wander off! During the conversation you need to pay close attention to what is being said. Do not allow anything to draw your attention away from each other. Leave behind disturbing habits like tapping your fingers or feet, especially if this obviously bothers the other person.

- Get to know as much as you can about the other person. People like to talk about themselves—encourage them to do this. If you become aware that you are doing most of the talking, something is wrong.
- Ask questions. Questions help direct the conversation. They demonstrate to the other person that you are interested in them. People like to talk about themselves—encourage them in that. If you see yourself talking more than the other person, then listen more.
- Find common topics. While the other person is talking, take note of topics in which you have the same experiences. Later in the conversation or another time bring up and share some of these common experiences.

All of us long for the kind of love that is committed, intimate and passionate. However, there is an element of vulnerability needed to be in an intimate, loving relationship. Professor C. S. Lewis wrote this about it:

“To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be pained and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. And in that casket of selfishness your heart begins to change. It becomes hard, unbreakable and never to be softened again. The only place outside of Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers of love is Hell.”²

The love triangle

Intimacy—One aspect of true love is intimacy, which is the result of the complete trust and acceptance present in the relationship. This trust is evident in communication and expressed in emotions and actions. This same trust then leads to sharing of feelings, thoughts, and opinions without fear. True love is characterized by this kind of intimate, mutually engaging communication. But this in itself is not enough for true love.

Commitment—Trust is complete only if there is commitment in the relationship. Commitment means that the person is accepted as he is with all his weaknesses and faults, regardless of how he will respond to us over the course of years. This type of commitment is independent of outward appearance, performance, and change in popularity. In other words, if we are committed to someone, we will love them even when they are not attractive, popular or their performance isn’t what it used to be anymore. Commitment provides constant sustenance for trust. Without commitment it is impossible to develop long lasting trust. If there is no commitment in a relationship, sooner or later trust will disappear because we will discover that the focus was really on performance or outward appearance and not on the real self. True commitment in a love relationship is best expressed in marriage. This means we bind ourselves to our spouse for our whole lives, accepting all the joy, blessings, legal, financial and social responsibilities that go along with the relationship.

Passion—Lastly, if trust pairs up with a lifelong marriage commitment, then passion can come next, like the icing on a cake. On the one hand, passion means the deep flame of emotion one person feels for another; on the other hand it means pure physical attraction. Both are important aspects of love, but cannot keep love alive for the duration of a lifetime. It is just “icing on the cake.”

²C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1991), 121.

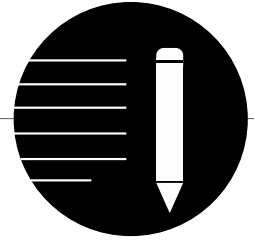
Passion is an emotional fire one feels for their marriage partner. It's an unexplainable, unspeakable feeling that says: "We want to spend every minute together!" Passion also includes physical attraction to the other person. This characteristic particularly requires the limits set up within marriage because passion expressed without commitment is empty and disappointing.

Physical passion means the other person's body is desirable and you are attracted or drawn to it. This aspect of passion is an important part in a love relationship, for it is a way to express the deep love one person feels for another.

Today most "love" is based purely on physical passion, but trust and commitment are missing. However, without trust and commitment, the passion can quickly die. This is why the magazines and the media are constantly addressing the problem of keeping passion alive in a relationship. They come up with all kinds of practices that focus on people's behaviors, techniques and outward appearance. These are, however, things which change. The key to keeping passion alive is not found in performance or outward appearance, but in trust and commitment—and these cannot be replaced by anything else.

A truly intimate relationship does not just fall into our laps or just happen. We have to work hard at it. It requires sacrifice, a willingness to give up your life for the other person. The invested energy, vulnerability and honesty will give back a thousand times the return since it fulfills our deepest inner longings. People desire that others will completely know them and still accept them. This is the essence of an intimate relationship.

LESSON PLAN



08.

Intimate relationships
The Beauty of Love

Love or
Something
Else?

Lesson Plan

Individual exercise
Love and its counterfeits
The expression of love
Group exercise

The Purpose of the Lesson

By the end of the lesson your students can distinguish between love and some of its counterfeits, recognize the characteristics of true love and pick two aspects of love that they want to develop in themselves.

1. Individual exercise

10

Encourage your students to think through their responses carefully, and to give reasons for their answers.

Beginning the lesson

Imagine for a few minutes that a friend of yours writes to you for advice. Choose one of the following letters (included in your Student Notes) and write your response.

Dear _____,

Last week I met a boy who is very good looking. He thinks I'm really pretty, too. We went for a walk together and after the walk, he kissed me. He's a really good kisser, and we kissed for a while. I'm not sure I should have kissed him so soon—I mean, maybe he kisses a lot of girls. But still, I can't wait to see him again. Do you think I'm in love?

Laura

Dear _____,

Ruth and I have been good friends for three years. We talk about all sorts of things, and we know we can trust each other. She recently moved to another town, so we don't see each other as often as we used to. I miss her, but I store up all sorts of things to tell her the next time we can get together. I look forward to having our friendship grow even deeper. You know, I think I might be in love with her. What do you think?

Daniel

After they write their responses, ask a few students to read theirs out loud.

2. Love with its counterfeit

10

On the whiteboard, create a chart that looks like this:

Love	Something Else

Love is the foundation for any strong and lasting relationship

Sometimes, though, we have trouble recognizing love when we see it because of the number of counterfeit loves that the world has to offer.

Fill in the students' responses on the chart.

- Ask the question: Using your insights from these letters or other knowledge you might have, how can you recognize true love?

[Once the students have finished offering their responses, you may want to add to their list from the following items if any important aspects have been left out.]

“LOVE”

- Respect of the other person and self-respect
- Enjoyment of the relationship
- Fun, sense of humor about life
- Affection demonstrated
- Comfortable with partner having other friends and interests
- Patience in allowing the relationship to develop over time
- Respect of partner's ideas, values, beliefs
- Responsible to control my own physical desires
- Secure in partner's love
- Foundation of friendship
- Honest and open communication
- Sensitive to partner's needs

Notice that you can love someone intimately without having sex with them. In fact, our description of love is much like the description of intimate friendship that we discussed previously.

Intimacy includes much more than the physical realm. People who love one another strive toward emotional, mental, social, moral and spiritual intimacy—not just physical intimacy.

One of the things that makes sex so special in marriage is that it is a kind of intimacy that you have with only one person with whom you have already established emotional and spiritual intimacy, and to whom you are committed for life.

- Now ask the question: Using your insights from the letters or other knowledge you might have, how can you tell when it's “something else”?

“Something else”

- Discounting of partner's ideas, values, beliefs, emotions



Fill in the students' responses on the chart.

Once the students have finished offering their responses, you may want to add to their list from the following items if any important aspects have been left out.

- Relationship becomes burdensome
- Fun, sense of humor become harder to maintain
- Takes rather than gives
- Prominent jealousy
- Pressure put on partner to yield to physical desires
- Neglect of everyone and everything but partner
- Growing neglect of partner
- Insensitivity to partner's needs
- Domination of one partner by the other (possible violence)
- Broken promises and lack of trust
- Guarded communication
- Nagging doubts about the relationship

As you consider your relationships with members of the opposite sex, you may want to remember this chart and use the traits we've listed to help you evaluate whether you are really in love (or if the other person is really in love with you).

Love never puts the other person at risk.

Here's a situation to consider:

Bob and Lucy have known each other for three months and say they are very much in love. They are both 15 years old and planning to get married. But they cannot get married for at least another three years.

- **Girls:** Lucy comes to you and says, "I know Bob really loves me and wants to have sex with me. What do you think I should do?" What would you tell her? Why?
- **Boys:** Bob comes to you and says, "I really love Lucy and don't think I can stand to wait three years until we can get married. If we really love each other, what would be wrong with having sex now?" What will you say to him? Why?

3. The expression of love

10

Often, people think of love as merely a feeling. But love is much more than that.

Love is valuing someone, which must be practiced and expressed in day-to-day life. Love is not tested or proved in romantic settings, but in the most difficult and mundane circumstances of life.



The qualities of love listed in this chart are taken from 1 Corinthians 13 in the Bible. If you have a Bible, you may want to read this chapter to your class (especially verses 4-7).

As noted on your Student Notes, a person demonstrating true love is:

- Patient
- Kind
- Trusting
- Loyal
- Glad whenever truth wins out
- Able to endure
- Protecting
- Hopeful
- Well-mannered
- Committed forever
- Not demanding his/her own way
- Not irritable or touchy
- Not envious
- Not boastful
- Not selfish
- Not glad about injustice
- Not rude
- Does not hold grudges

When you are wondering if a relationship is love or “something else,” you might review this list and see if both the other person and yourself are actively expressing these qualities of love.

4. Group exercise

15

Have one person from each group take notes.

Divide the students into same-sex groups of four or five. Have the students develop a series of one-sentence practical examples of the qualities of love listed in the chart. You might give the students a couple of the following examples to get them thinking in the right direction:

- A loving person explains the math homework to him, even though she’s already tried to explain it four times. (PATIENT)
- A loving person refuses to join in when a group of friends starts talking about a friend in a negative light. (LOYAL)

After five minutes, ask the reporters to share a couple of their group's one-sentence examples of love.

Have your students individually write their answers to the following questions:

- In that situation, a loving person may even speak up and tell them about that friend's wonderful qualities. (PROTECTING)

Paired activity:

Artists often struggle to convey an internal mood, emotion, or quality through a painting, a song or a sculpture. Tell your students that today they will have the chance to be sculptors. Have the students work together in same-sex pairs. Each pair should choose one of the qualities from either the "something else" list on the board or from the left-hand column of the "love" chart (in their Student Notes). Then, they should work together to "sculpt" themselves into a pose that would convey the heart of this trait to an audience. The idea is that the students become statues that communicate their chosen quality with one image. Give them three minutes to plan their sculpture, then call on each pair to present their sculpture to the rest of the class.

Ending the Lesson

Just as we were able to sculpt our bodies into poses that communicate qualities of love or "something else," we are all also (whether we realize it or not) sculpting our lives and actions to resemble the qualities on one of these lists. The choices we make in our relationships are the chisel we use to sculpt something beautiful or something ridiculous or grotesque.

1. Right now, the sculpture of your life is a "work in progress." When you stand back to look at it, how does it look? Is your sculpture one of love or of "something else"?
2. Which two qualities of love would you most like the person you fall in love with to have? Why?
3. Which two qualities of love would you most like to develop in your life as a gift to the person with whom you will fall in love? Why?
4. Choose one of the two qualities you listed above. What can you do today to demonstrate this quality to a friend or family member? (Remember, the sculpting of our habits takes lots of practice.)

STUDENT NOTES



Love or Something Else?

Dear _____,

Last week I met a boy who is very good looking. He thinks I'm really pretty, too. We went for a walk together and after the walk, he kissed me. He's a really good kisser, and we kissed for a while. I'm not sure I should have kissed him so soon—I mean, maybe he kisses a lot of girls. But still, I can't wait to see him again. Do you think I'm in love? —Laura

Dear _____,

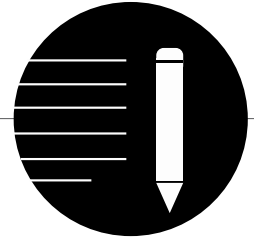
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A person demonstrating true love is...

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Patient | • Well-mannered | • Not irritable or touchy |
| • Kind | • Trusting | • Not envious |
| • Loyal | • Committed forever | • Not boastful |
| • Glad whenever truth wins out | • Protecting | • Not selfish |
| • Hopeful | • Not demanding his/her own way | • Not glad about injustice |
| • Loyal | | • Not rude |
| | | • Does not hold grudges |

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LESSON PLAN



09.

Intimate relationships
The Beauty of Love

Leaving a Legacy

Lesson Plan

Opening Exercise
Qualities of Healthy Families
Thieves of What You Want
Ending the Lesson

The Purpose of the Lesson

By the end of this lesson your students will be able to describe the characteristics of the family they intend to build when ready, describe two kinds of behavior that can prevent them from ever having the family they would like to build, and express their thanks in a note to a family member for his or her personal sacrifice.

1. Opening exercise

10

Beginning the lesson

[Before students arrive, write the words:

“MY FUTURE FAMILY WILL BE...”

at the top of the whiteboard]

[As they begin entering, give them a chance to complete the sentence by writing their answer on the whiteboard.]

2. Qualities of Healthy Families

20

Meaningless or sarcastic completions often indicate painful experiences. Try to see behind the written defensiveness. Be kind, compassionate and patient.

[Ask those who did not get to finish to tell the class the rest of what they had intended to write. Then review the rest of the completed sentences on the whiteboard. Ask students who wrote illegible, meaningless, humorous or sarcastic completions to explain what they had in mind.]

Qualities of healthy families

[Ask students to divide into small groups and when they are ready, ask them to work together to describe a good family – one they would like to build when they are ready to have a family.]

Ask the students to :

1. list all the characteristics of a good family that they can think of in two minutes, and
2. on a piece of paper write the words, “A GOOD FAMILY...”

[After two minutes, tell your students to start creating a banner that illustrates a healthy family.]

[After three more minutes, ask all your students to prepare to take notes on the reports from each group. Then ask the reporters to share their group’s results with the class, then their paper, one at a time. As each reporter finishes, ask the class if they have any questions about any of the group’s ideas.]

[When all the reporters have finished, add to their lists from the list below, any characteristics of good families that have not already been mentioned. Again, encourage all your students to add to their notes. Clarify and comment on any that are unclear to your students.]

- A good relationship between the marital partners
- Good communication patterns
- Appreciation shown for one another
- Time spent together, including leisure time
- Commitment to each other and the family group
- Parents and children who learn from each other
- Emotional closeness and shared activities
- A sense of trust
- Enjoyment of family traditions
- Shared religious core, values, and philosophy of life
- Respect for others taught
- A sense of play and humor
- Great cooperation
- Shared responsibilities
- Differences worked out
- A sense of right and wrong taught
- Service to others valued
- Flexibility and spontaneity in interactions
- Family members feel understood and are understanding
- Reasonable self-sufficiency
- Crises handled in a positive way¹

Now discuss the following questions:

What kind of families would you like to have personally? What would be true about this family? What would relationships be like with each other? What kind of habits would you like to develop? How would you solve the difficulties and conflicts?

3. Thieves of what you want

10

Collect your students' papers, then ask them to take notes as you tell them about two destructive thieves that can rob them of the opportunity of ever having the kind of family they want. These two thieves undermine their ability to develop healthy relationships, and in some cases, can destroy their most precious loved ones. You may elaborate on each of these, but watch your time.

¹This list was created based on Dr. Merville O. Vincent: Qualities of Healthy Families.

1. Addiction to alcohol or drugs:

- robs you of your desire for anything else.
- keeps you a desperate slave to satisfying your cravings.
- keeps you economically impoverished.
- steals the joy out of relationships.

2. Sexual involvement outside of a committed, lifelong faithful relationship (like marriage):

- bonds you emotionally to someone with whom reaching your goals may never be possible.
- risks early pregnancy, prevents you from establishing foundations for mutual growth in the emotional, moral, economic or spiritual areas of your relationship.
- risks STIs along with their possible consequences of infertility, medical complications at birth, and even premature death. (Note: Not all infertility is due to premarital sexual involvement.)

Remember that these thieves have the potential to damage your dreams and your hopes for healthy relationships now and in your future.

4. Ending the lesson

5



There is one more thing I would like you to think about before we finish this lesson.

Even if your family is far from perfect, you can probably still think of ways they have helped you in your life for which you can thank them.

You may live in a wonderful, protective, nourishing family right now, or your family may be chaotic, broken apart, or threatening. I am sure there is at least one person in your family—maybe more—who has sacrificed for your benefit.

- Maybe your dad or mom works extra hard to provide food and shelter for you.
- Maybe a brother or sister has given up opportunities to take care of you.
- Maybe an uncle, aunt or grandparent has sacrificed to help you survive or thrive.
- Maybe someone who is not actually related to you has helped you in some way.

Write one person a short note thanking him or her for what they have done for you and give this note to them.



V.

Intimate relationships The Beauty of Love

Sex: Joy, Purpose, Responsibility

It might seem strange to say it, but sex does have a purpose. Just as a pen is designed for the specific purpose of writing (it wouldn't be much good as a screwdriver), sex was designed with a specific purpose in mind.

Knowing this purpose is vitally important. Imagine that you have a motorbike. The designed function of the bike and the purpose of its existence is to transport you from one place to another on solid ground. If it is not used according to its designed function, but instead was used as a motorboat, it would be useless. You could not travel across a body of water on a motorbike. The purpose and function of a motorbike is not to be a motorboat.

The same principle holds true for sex. If we want to have a happy sex life, we must first answer the question, "*What is*

the purpose and role of sex?” Only when we know the answer to the purpose of sex, can we fulfill its intended purpose and reap its rewards.

It seems that the media goes from one extreme to the other when talking about the purpose of sex. First, they suggest that we should have sexual relationships with whomever we want. After all, we are free and we only live once! Many advertisements, music videos, popular music lyrics, newspaper reports, articles and advice columns promote this message. Then they tip the scale to the other side and scare everyone with the shallowness of short-term relationships, the trauma of divorce and the dangers of sexually transmitted infections.

The media cannot find a balance between these two extremes. We get conflicting messages. On the one side we are encouraged to have sex whenever we feel like it because our libido is so strong we are unable to resist it. On the other hand, we are warned not to have casual sex because it is so dangerous it could even kill us! Society is deceiving itself by encouraging young people to do something that produces consequences from which it is also trying to protect them.

Why all this confusion? Why are people receiving vague information and contradictory instructions? Under these circumstances, how can someone make a decision? Who determines what is right? To answer these questions we have to have a clear view of the purpose of sex and the responsibilities that go along with it.

The purpose and beauty of sex

You may think it is disillusioning to talk about the purpose of sex. You may be saying to yourself, sex is such an extraordinary and wonderful experience; how can it be reduced to purposes and rational points of an outline?

Sex is not merely a feeling or experience, but rather an act in which the whole being, emotions, will, intellect and all five senses (smell, taste, sight, touch and hearing) of two people are involved. It is not enough to reduce it to mere poetic expressions of intense emotions and feelings. Undoubtedly, emotions play a very key role during sexual intercourse, but sex is much more than just feelings.

Many people want to experience the beauty and delights of sex without examining its purpose. However, the beauty of sex is hidden in its purpose. Part of the purpose of the sexual act is the bond it creates between two people.

The sexual act has the power to fuse a couple together in complete vulnerability and total abandonment to each other. Although vulnerability includes risk (and sex equates to total vulnerability), it also implies an unspoken commitment to the other person. Having sex with someone not only expresses this unspoken commitment, but also anticipates that our unspoken commitment has been answered with an unspoken commitment of equal intensity. If the unspoken commitment between two people is somehow damaged, either one or both partners will experience rejection. They will feel that their trust in the other person has been broken, although it was based only on assumptions. A clearly communicated commitment can prevent this kind of misunderstanding and pain. This is why an openly acknowledged commitment is so important.

Trust is essential for vulnerability to take place. Without trust a person dare not be vulnerable to his partner. The best place to develop trust and experience sex to its fullest is in the context of a

mutually faithful, lifelong commitment. We will talk about this more in the reading “*Why Wait?*” If sex is best expressed within marriage, what exactly is its purpose in that context.

The first purpose of sex is to express and illustrate the unity, love and commitment between a man and a woman.

In many countries there is a law that requires all ingredients to be listed on the label of every packaged food product sold within the country. Wouldn't it be good if sex had a label like that? As a matter of fact, it does and this label was written 3,500 years ago by God. He, after all, created sex and through the ancient prophet Moses, He communicated much of the meaning and purpose of sex. This writing is found in the first book of the Bible, Genesis.

He writes the following about the culmination of the creation process: “*God created man in his own image...male and female he created them.*”¹ From this we can see that sexuality was an essential part of mankind planned by God from the very beginning. It is a natural part of being human to be either male or female. Not much later Moses describes the unique way in which God created man and woman for each other.

God created man and woman to be incomplete without each other. That is why Moses said “*...a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they shall become one flesh.*”² Sexual expression is the most fundamental way a man and woman become “one flesh.”

Moses mentions two things about the woman: that she is a “helpmate” and “suitable” for the man. It is a fact that man and woman are “suitable for each other,” in that during intercourse they are able to satisfy each other's individual psychological and emotional desires.

As Moses said, “*...the man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife: and they shall become one flesh.*”³ He uses the strongest possible Hebrew expressions for the words “leave” and “cleave.” Leaving means the giving up of the intimacy between child and parent for the intimacy between husband and wife. This new bond is as unbreakable as the child-parent relationship.

The Hebrew definition of the word “cleave” is “an inseparable joint.” Sexual contact is the image and permanent reminder of the unity and perfect bond in which husband and wife become one flesh. This is the purpose of sex. Through sex a spiritual and emotional bond takes place. The two people engaging in sex are expressing the lifetime commitment they have made to each other. This commitment to one another for a lifetime becomes a reality to touch, feel and experience.

God's primary purpose in creating human sex organs was to provide a way for intercourse and thereby demonstrate the unity of a man and a woman. Perhaps, until now, you thought the Bible was prudish and did not include anything about sex. However, the Bible speaks about sex in many places. It teaches us about the purpose of sex, its appropriate manifestations and its enjoyment. The topic of a whole book of the Bible, the Song of Solomon, is about the joy of sex!

The primary purpose of sex is unity and the expression of the continual commitment between man and wife. This physical relationship is the event that expresses the intensity of the spiritual/emotional relationship which exists between the husband and wife. It should be the manifestation of the committed love and unity that characterizes every couple's relationship. Without commitment

¹Genesis 1:27.

²Genesis 2:24.

³Genesis 2:24.

and without spiritual, emotional and intellectual unity, physical unity is empty or, at the very least, weak.

Sex is not the source of a full-bodied, happy relationship, but rather the expression of it. Sex is not the source of unity, but rather the expression of it. Through sex, the life-long love that a couple feels for each other becomes an actual physical experience. Expecting sex to provide or lead to a life-long commitment does not work. Intimacy and acceptance are not the result of sexual activity. We should rather build a marriage relationship in which the characteristics of intimacy and acceptance already exist and are naturally expressed through sex.

Many people start a sexual relationship with the aim of finding intimacy and acceptance. How sad this is. If they understood the purpose of sex, they would not expect to gain something out of it that it was never intended to provide. People who seek to gain intimacy through sex are like parachute jumpers who use only a bed sheet. The experience of sex resembles true intimacy and acceptance, but it is in fact only the expression of these things.

The second purpose of sex is to give joy and pleasure to a married couple.

Actor Ricardo Montelbán once said, *“A good lover is someone who can satisfy one woman throughout her lifetime and who can be satisfied by one woman for his lifetime. A good lover is not someone who regularly changes partners, for even a dog can do that.”* The secondary purpose of sex is to give joy and pleasure. Sex is a gratifying and wonderful experience, but the secret to its enjoyment is not in experiencing it with many partners, but rather in really enjoying it with one partner throughout life. Great sex is not taking as many women to bed as possible or going to bed with as many men as possible; it is making sex exciting, delightful and filled with variety for an entire lifetime with the same person.

You might find it strange that the Bible speaks about sexual pleasure: *“Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love.”*⁴ It is God’s intention that we find joy in sex. A secure kind of joy exists when we know that we can totally trust our partner, who knows us and accepts us as we are. We do not have to perform, to prove ourselves or achieve something. As soon as sex becomes a competitive performance, it loses its real joy and pleasure. It is impossible to enjoy sexual intercourse when we are thinking about whether we are good enough, better than the previous partner or if we can meet their needs or not. The purpose of sex is to give unclouded joy and pleasure. This can only be experienced when sex is in its proper place, namely in the marriage relationship.

The physical act of sex can be enjoyable, even without any spiritual and emotional content or commitment. This, however, is very far from the real purpose of sex. The human body was created to enjoy sex. Sex accomplishes two things at once: it expresses unity and provides joy and pleasure. It is impossible to separate these purposes. If we merely say that the purpose of sex is only enjoyment and not unity, then sex will become nothing more than a response to an animal instinct. This kind of sex is self-centered and cannot result in true joy or true pleasure, because it is not based on total commitment and unity.

On the other hand, if there is commitment, but no pleasure and joy in sex, it becomes a boring necessity within the marriage relationship. It cannot truly express the unity that exists between two people because their hearts and inner selves are not involved in the act, only their bodies. These

⁴Proverbs 5:19.

two purposes of expressing unity of soul and enjoying the pleasure of intercourse are inseparable. Whenever we try to separate one from the other, sex can become an empty, self-centered, instinctive urge to satisfy at will.

God created and planned sex. It was God's idea. He wanted it to exist. He is not anti-sex, but pro-sex. There is a proper place and environment for sex to take place—within a marriage. If sex does not occur in the right place (marriage), then feelings of shame, guilt, fear of rejection and being used can result.

The third purpose of sex is procreation.

Finally, the third purpose of sex is procreation. This is not its primary goal, as many people may think, but it is an important aspect of sex. The miracle of sexual union is that a new life can be conceived in the process. What a wonderful fulfillment of sexual unity to produce a new life! This new life is a fantastic expression of the unity that exists in the relationship of a husband and wife.

The potential of creating a new life exists in each man and woman. Conception is the result of an act that requires total emotional, intellectual, and conscious commitment; and which encompasses the totality of our senses, including reaching the peak of emotional ecstasy. Of course there is great cause for joy when the result of this kind of sexual intercourse is a child. In addition to experiencing unity in sex and the physical pleasure that goes along with it, we have also become tools in the hand of God to create a new human being!

Sex is the only act that reflects unity, gives pleasure and assists in the formation of new life. Knowing this to be true, how can we allow ourselves to degrade this tool of creation to merely an instinctive physical act? It is important to note here that those who cannot have children can still have a very satisfying and fulfilling sex life. "Becoming one flesh..." does not necessarily mean every married couple will have children. The act of sex simply includes this possibility.

Those who establish a sexual relationship must be ready to handle the possibility of pregnancy. No contraceptive method is one hundred percent effective. It is important for us to realize that every time we have sex there is a risk of pregnancy. Since this privilege and responsibility can be a real consequence, we must only enter into a sexual relationship if we are ready and able to shoulder the results of our actions.

The only way to guarantee a great sex life is to use the gift of sex according to the purposes for which it was designed: unity, commitment, joy, pleasure, and procreation. Modern man wants to meet the requirements of only one of these purposes, namely pleasure. This is why sex in the world today has become no more than the understanding and use of sexual techniques, tricks and tools. There have never been so many psychological and family problems resulting from sexual problems as there are today. The sexual revolution brought with it an emphasis on the pleasure of sex.

The balance between the three purposes of sex has been destroyed, resulting in the multitude of sexual problems we see in the media. The new techniques and ideas do not solve these problems because they are, in fact, not sexual; they are emotional, psychological and relational. We cannot solve these problems with techniques, but need to find answers for the problems of the heart and soul.

One of the problems that influence a misconception of sex is that people have not learned to communicate. They cannot express their needs. It is much easier to replace verbal communication with an action like sex. They think that this will take care of their emotional and psychological

needs and eliminate their problems. In truth, those couples who learn to solve their emotional and psychological problems with communication will also be able to solve their sexual problems because of their enhanced ability to communicate. Sexual techniques will never make a relationship work, because a sole focus on techniques shows that the couple is unable to resolve their problems by talking about them. If they cannot communicate, there is really no foundation on which to build and maintain their relationship.

The responsibilities accompanying sex

The sexual revolution tried to make us forget that there are responsibilities accompanying sex. God created sex, but this does not mean that we can use it any way we like. We are to comply with its purpose. If we do not, there will be consequences. Things work best when they are used according to the manufacturer's instructions. If we refuse to use something according to its designated function, it could damage the item, as well as cause harm to us. The same is true about sex. What are some of the responsibilities that go along with this very important aspect of life?

1. A responsibility towards society

Society says that *"Sex is a private act between two individuals, behind closed doors, and therefore it is none of anyone else's business."* This is not true. There are many social ramifications to abusing our sexuality.

There are financial ramifications of irresponsible sex. Society pays huge amounts of money for the termination of unwanted pregnancies. The treatment of STIs also costs large sums of money. Increasing amounts of cash are needed for the treatment of ever growing numbers of sexually transmitted infections. *The Institute of Medicine reported that in 1997 ten billion dollars was spent on the treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, not including HIV/AIDS.*⁵

In addition to a financial cost there is also a psychological price. There are many psychological and emotional problems that result from irresponsible sexual activity. Teenage mothers, who must quit school because of their pregnancy become unemployed, homeless, rejected by society and go through deep psychological trauma. The children born to mothers who are not fully matured, have a higher mortality rate and are intellectually underdeveloped.

Despite the fact that sex is a private act between two adults, it can have physical, social, economical, political, emotional and moral consequences. According to Dr. C. Everett Koop, former Surgeon General of the United States, *"If you sleep with someone, you don't just sleep with that person (from the disease's point of view), but with all of his previous partners, and all of their previous partners going back ten years."*⁶

Therefore, if someone cheats on their spouse and then returns home, the innocent spouse may justifiably fear having sex with their spouse. Having sexual relations with an unfaithful partner exposes you to any STIs carried by the person with whom your partner had sex and to any STIs of all of that person's previous sexual partners. You could say: *"If I sleep with my spouse it means I will be sleeping*

⁵Thomas R Eng and William T. Butler, *The Hidden Epidemic: Confronting Sexually Transmitted Diseases* (Washington, DC: National Academic Press, 1997).

⁶<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1988/02/26/surgeon-general-minces-no-words-on-aids/13b3b578-dca0-43bc-a853-8567f8a73152/>, accessed Feb 20, 2021.

with the person with whom he cheated on me, and not only that person, but also all their previous sexual partners!”

Sex is not a private act when an unwanted child pays the price for it, when society pays the price for it and when the consequence is a deadly epidemic of sexually transmitted infections.

2. A responsibility towards my partner and my potential offspring

A sexual relationship requires two people. They must have a sense of responsibility toward each other. They must feel responsible for the other person’s life, responsible enough not to infect them with a disease. The man is responsible for not putting the woman into a situation that would be detrimental to her such as pregnancy outside of marriage. The man/boy who gets a woman/girl pregnant outside of marriage puts her livelihood, health and social position at risk. He exposes her to the danger of facing these difficulties—from financial difficulties to health problems—alone. He only wants to use her and forgets that he is accountable for her life, future and health.

We are also responsible for our unborn children. Those who have sexual relationships outside marriage risk the life of their potential child. If they decide not to keep the child, they have to assume the responsibility for the psychological and emotional consequences of an abortion. Living with this burden throughout one’s life can be very difficult.

If they decide to keep the child they are exposing it to the uncertainty that characterizes relationships outside marriage. Eighty percent of the teenage girls who get pregnant are left to live on their own by their boyfriends.⁷ We cannot just do what we want. One single sexual act may have a life-long effect on our partner and on the child born or aborted as a result.

Before we get involved in premarital sex, we need to ask ourselves some questions. How would we feel if we were in our partner’s situation? How would we want to be treated? Would we want to take the same risk they are taking? If a child should come out of this act, what would we do? If a child is born, what kind of chances will it have in life? How would something like this affect our partner? Are we ready to bear the responsibility of these consequences? When thinking about becoming sexually active, we need to assume total responsibility for not only ourselves, but also our partner.

The ties of marriage mean we take total responsibility for our partner—in spite of obligations, disadvantages and financial cost. Many people say *“What use is a marriage license if we already live together and are committed to each other?”* If they are really committed to each other, why are they afraid of that piece of paper? If something is holding them back from taking total social and legal responsibility for their partner, it indicates that one or both still want to leave a door open for a way out in case things do not work out as planned. Such people are not taking responsibility for their partner; they may even be using them to meet their present needs without having to make a total commitment. They want all the advantages of the relationship, but assume few of the associated responsibilities.

3. Responsibility towards my body

Another responsibility of sex concerns our bodies. Our body is a gift from God and we need to treat it well. It is our obligation to take the best possible care of it. People who participate in sexual

⁷The writer of this lecture is indebted to the authors Josh McDowell and Dick Day, *Why Wait? What You Need to Know about the Teen Sexuality Crisis* (San Bernardino, CA: Here’s Life, 1987). For the “Responsibilities that accompany sex,” c. part, certain thoughts are the work of the above authors.

promiscuity expose themselves to the dangers of sickness by contracting one or more of the 35 types of sexually transmitted infections in existence today.

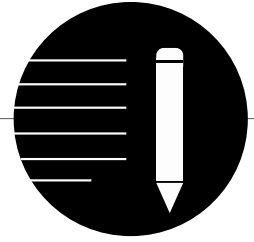
4. Responsibility towards God

Finally, one of the most important responsibilities of sex is to God. The creator of sexuality gave it to us and we will be called on to give an account of how we handled this responsibility. He is the one who will ask whether we used it according to its proper purpose.

Conclusion

Sex is one of the most wonderful experiences in life. We have to make the most of it. The enormous potential of sex is too valuable to waste in a self-centered way. The true potential of sex can only be discovered in the context of a life-long, committed, loving, marriage relationship. Our responsibility is to enjoy sex according to its purpose, and to do so at the right time, in the right place and with the right person. In this way, we can enjoy sex in a way that no casual relationship can provide.

LESSON PLAN



10.

Intimate relationships
The Beauty of Love

Sex in its Place

Lesson Plan

Self-control is the utmost
component of character

Intimacy

Intimacy Without Sex

Sex in Perspective

The Purpose of the Lesson

By the end of this lesson your students should be able to recognize that the development of character leads to self-control; realize that sexual impulses are normal, but sexual behaviors are controllable; be able to recognize the character qualities that contribute to true intimacy in a relationship; and understand that responsible sexual behavior has its ultimate expression in a lifelong, committed relationship—marriage.

1. Self-control is the utmost component of character

15

Beginning the lesson

Since we have concluded the unit on Character, and have been discussing good character traits and how to develop them, does that make us model citizens immediately? Is it true that you would never be tempted to cheat on a test, or lie to your parents to avoid punishment, or behave in an uncaring manner towards your friends?

Probably not! That's okay; it doesn't mean that you have failed at developing good character. Rather, it means that good character takes time to develop. We will all be growing in our character until the day we die. It is a continual process.

Today we need to spend some time talking about what is probably the most interesting and sometimes confusing thing about us as human beings—our sexuality. I realize that sometimes this is not an easy or comfortable subject to talk about, but it is a part of us that we need to understand, deal with, and make decisions about if we want to develop to our full potential.

Let's go back to our "Dimensions of a Person" diagram. Can anyone remind us what the five areas of the diagram represent?

- Physical
- Mental
- Emotional
- Social
- Spiritual

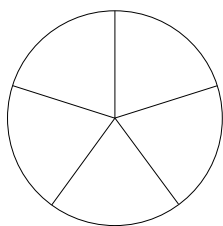
Which of these five areas do you believe relates to sex?

The correct answer is that sex is part of all the dimensions of a person, not just the physical or emotional.

Sex also brings into play all of the character qualities, such as respect and responsibility, and leads to another quality—self-control.

Self-control simply means that you think before you act. You think about what the consequences of your actions might be for yourself and others, then make decisions based upon that information.

"Think before you act" is the moral of the following story by the Greek storyteller, Aesop:



The Frogs and the Well¹

Two frogs lived together in a swamp. But one hot summer the swamp dried up, and they left it to look for another place to live in, for frogs like damp places if they can find them. By and by they came to a deep well, and one of them looked down into it and said to the other, “What a great place we have found! Look at all that nice cool water! Let’s jump in and settle down here!”

But the other, who had a wiser head on his shoulders, replied, “Not so fast, my friend. It looks good now, but supposing this well dried up like the swamp, where would we be then? How would we ever jump out of such a deep place?”

Sex is a good thing and was created to be enjoyed by two people in a committed relationship.



In the next few minutes discuss the physical, emotional, mental and relational consequences of jumping in—like STIs, pregnancy, guilt, etc.

Sexual feelings are normal and real, and no one should be embarrassed for having them. However, acting on the basis of these feelings alone can turn sex from a very good thing into something bad, meaning bad consequences.

Indeed, as with the frogs, the well is very deep and there are consequences for jumping in.

- What kind of consequences are there if we ‘jump’ into the ‘sex well’?

Self-control also means that you do what is right, even at those times when you would rather not. Remember our discussion of good character as something that is done consistently over time and in difficult circumstances?

Is self-control really possible?

Some people believe that no one, especially teenagers, are capable of controlling their sexual desires. I believe that is not only wrong, but it is an insult to teenagers. How would you feel about receiving the following message?

Dear Teenagers,

It is best that you not indulge in robbery. Just say “no.” But we know that most of you are not capable of controlling yourself and will steal before you reach adulthood. Therefore, here are some guns and getaway cars so you can steal and not get caught.

But, in case you fail and you do get arrested, we will find a lawyer who will help you “beat the rap” (avoid the consequences).

Sounds pretty silly, doesn’t it? But some people are sending you this same kind of message. They are advising you to abstain from premarital sex or alcohol, but the unspoken attitude is that you won’t succeed.

I believe that you are capable of controlling your sexual behavior and of making responsible decisions!



¹Aesop, “The Two Frogs,” <https://fablesaesaop.com/the-two-frogs.html>, accessed Feb 20, 2021.

2. Intimacy

15-

Ask the students to write down their thoughts in about one minute.



Divide the class in groups of four or five and read them the following poems:

One way to help you practice self-control is to understand why people engage in sexual behavior. When we understand why we do something, we are moving towards gaining control of that behavior.

- How would you answer this question: “*What are some of the purposes of sex?*”

There are many purposes or reasons for sex (pleasure, to have children, express love, feel significant, feel secure), but how many of you wrote down “intimacy” (sense of belonging, intimate relationships, bonding)?

People were designed to connect with one another, to communicate who they are. Understanding what can be communicated through sex is helpful in deciding whether or not to become sexually active. I doubt that any of you want to say something in a physical way that you don’t mean any more than you want to tell a lie verbally. Since more than 75% of communication is nonverbal, it is as important to consider what you say with your actions as it is to consider what you say with your mouth.

Being honest is a character trait. Being honest in what you communicate physically and how you express intimacy is also a character issue.

We can only experience true intimacy when mutual trust, respect and responsibility are present.

Poem #1

I do my thing and you do your thing.
I am not in this world to live up to your expectations,
And you are not in this world to live up to mine.
You are you and I am I;
If by chance we find each other, it’s beautiful.
If not, it can’t be helped.

Poem #2

If I just do my thing and you do yours,
We stand in danger of losing each other and ourselves.
I am not in this world to live up to your expectations;
But I am in this world to confirm you as a unique human being,

And to be confirmed by you.
 We are fully ourselves in relation to each other;
 The “I” detached from the “Thou” disintegrates.
 I do not find you by chance;
 I find you by an active life of reaching out.
 Rather than passively letting things happen to me,
 I can act intentionally to make them happen.
 I must begin with myself, true;
 But I must not end with myself;
 The truth belongs with two.

Answer the following questions:

1. How do these writers differ in what they are saying about intimacy, caring, commitment and sharing?
2. Which one would you want for a friend? Why?
3. What do you think the writer of the first poem would think about premarital sex? What about the writer of the second one? Why?

[Have several students share their group’s ideas on these questions.]

The writer of the second poem obviously understands that the true meaning of intimacy is bringing others into our lives and giving ourselves to them. It is through this action that we learn to share and trust, and to be patient, unselfish, kind, loyal and generous.

3. Intimacy without sex

10

Small group discussion

Some examples:

- Listens to problems
- Doesn’t judge
- Helps with homework
 - Keeps confidences
 - Doesn’t gossip behind their back

Some people limit their idea of intimacy to include only sexual relationships. However, close intimate relationship can occur without sexual involvement. The sense of belonging and connection that we all desire as human beings is possible to achieve without engaging in sexual behavior.

In fact, emotional intimacy is more powerful than physical intimacy. In the lesson on building friendships, we discussed the qualities of the friendship between Damon and Pythias: commitment over time, loyalty, trust, keeping their promises and sacrifice.

[Have the class break out into groups of three—of the same sex if possible—and list ways that intimacy can be expressed outside of sexual involvement.]

[After five minutes, bring the class back together and have as many students as time will allow share the things on their list.]

Practicing self-control of sexual behavior does not result in a loss of intimacy. Intimacy develops in relationships of trust; premarital sexual activity actually breaks trust and intimacy is then lost.

4. Sex in perspective

5

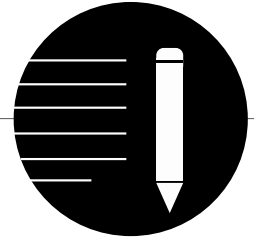
Where, then, does all of this come together? How can intimacy be expressed in all the dimensions of a person—physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual—without fear or loss of trust?

This can only be done within the context of a lifelong commitment to marriage. Only then can a person be vulnerable and take risks for the sake of the ongoing development of the relationship. This conviction is supported by several other factors that you will see as you progress in the YTL curriculum.

Working on developing self-control in order to abstain from sexual activity before marriage is not a temporary quality. Even married couples must be able to practice sexual self-control in order to remain faithful to their partner for a lifetime.

Marriage will not magically transform you into a person who can be faithful and trustworthy. Those are qualities that you need to practice and develop well before you commit yourself to another person if you want to have a lasting relationship.

LESSON PLAN



11.

Intimate relationships
The Beauty of Love

Sex at the Right Time

Lesson Plan

The purpose of sex
Two types of relationships
Personality and sex
Reasons sex was designed for
marriage
Worth the wait—commitment
story

The Purpose of the Lesson

By the end of the lesson your students understand the advantages of engaging in sex only in marriage as part of a lifelong commitment; they will learn how to differentiate between sex that ‘wants to get’ from sex that ‘wants to give.’

1. The purpose of sex

10

Have as many of the materials listed as possible on your desk:

- a teaspoon
- a shirt or blouse
 - a small container of oil
 - a flower

Accept humorous responses if you get them.



Beginning the lesson

Today I have some objects on my desk, designed for specific purposes. I'd like you to tell me what you think would be the result if I:

- used this spoon to chop meat;
- used this shirt to carry water;
- used this oil to make drinks for your next meal;
- used this flower to sweep the floor.

The point is that these are all very useful objects **when used for what they were designed to do**.

Everything that we design has one or more purposes. When something is designed for a specific purpose and then used for other purposes, the result is often great damage or destruction. For example, your pen is designed to be used for writing. If you try to use it as a screwdriver, you will destroy it.

Let's suppose you have a bicycle. The designed function of the bike and the purpose of its existence is to transport you from one place to another. If you don't use it according to its designed function, but use it as a boat, then the consequence will be that you will sink. It wasn't designed to be a boat. Obviously bicycles can be misused.

- Do you think people can be misused too?
- Can you think of a time when you were misused in some way?
- Can you think of a time when you misused someone else?

According to the Bible, all humans were designed. Our designer, God, has special purposes for us and is hurt when any of us is misused.

In designing human beings, one of the things God designed was sex and He designed it with a purpose.

You might find it strange to think that sex has a purpose. If we want to have a happy sexual life, first of all we must answer the question, what is the purpose and design of sex? Many people desire to discover the beauty and delights of sex, but ignore its purpose. However, this does not work because the beauty of sex is hidden in its purpose.

The purpose in the design of a bicycle is to help you get from one place to another. Its beauty also comes from its design, since while you go from one place to another, you can enjoy the speed, the wind blowing in your hair, the aromas from kitchens and gardens you pass. You cannot enjoy this beauty



unless you use a bicycle for its designed purpose. It is the same with sex. If you don't discover its purposes, you cannot fully enjoy its beauty.

God designed sex to express the total relationship between a man and a woman where there is complete giving and receiving between two people who trust each other enough to be vulnerable.

If two people are going to be vulnerable, they must develop and maintain trust between each other. For mutual trust to develop so that sexual intercourse can be more than a physical performance, a foundation of mutual commitment is needed. If the commitment in the relationship is broken, then one or both partners live through rejection and great emotional pain. This is why commitment is so important.



One of the most important purposes of sex is to express and demonstrate the unity of the married couple and their love and commitment for each other.

In the process of sexual intercourse a husband and wife renew their commitment to each other, express their love for each other and celebrate their unity as a couple as they enjoy each other.

- What do you think having sex expresses in the absence of marital commitment?

[Add any of the following they didn't already mention:

- desire to feel the thrill of climax
- desire to feel powerful
- desire to feel important to somebody
- desire to feel secure]

2. Two types of relationships

10

We will come back to this illustration at the end of the lesson.

[Bring a rose. Pass it around and ask each student to take one petal from the flower of the rose. Ask for the stem back.]

[At the far left end of your whiteboard write the word GIVE. At the far right, the word TAKE. Ask the question:]

- What is needed to develop a meaningful relationship?

[Write down their answers to the question on the whiteboard. Now circle each of the student responses, one at a time, and ask your students if it is motivated by giving or taking. If they conclude a response is motivated by giving, draw a line from the circled response to the word GIVE. If it is

Only as a person develops the spiritual part of their life will they discover that they can consistently be a giver in relationships and a giving partner in marriage.

motivated by taking or getting something from the other person, then draw a line to the word TAKE. Draw similar lines for each response including those you added. Finally, write the words UNITY, LOVE and COMMITMENT. Circle them, and draw a line to GIVE.

Ask students which type of love and commitment they would like to have in marriage. Then ask them what would help them be “givers” instead of “takers” in a relationship.]

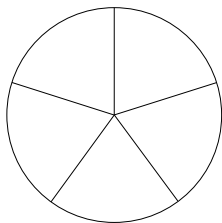
A person who is a giver in the relationship is one who is self-sacrificing and who does what is best for the other person.

[Ask your students if they remember any example of this type of “giving” in any of our previous lessons.]

3. Personality and sex

10

Draw this familiar diagram on the board without the area designations. Add the designations as your students recall them.



Do you remember the chart we used in Lesson 1 to discuss the different parts of personality?

- What are the different parts?
- In which area do you think we should place sex?

Here, for your reference are the 5 areas:

- Physical
- Mental
- Emotional
- Social
- Spiritual

Agree with the first student who indicates that sex is a part of all five areas of life. Sex affects and involves every part of our personality. Therefore, choices that students make about sex can be the foundation for a lifetime of intimate joy, deep relationships and reproductive health or they can be the beginning of an addiction, deep emotional hurt, inability to trust again, reproductive disorders and even premature death. You may be wondering, *“What, then, is the purpose of sex?”* *“If what I do with it can have so many lasting consequences in my life, how can I keep it in its proper role in my life?”*

Most packages include a set of instructions that explain the proper use of the contents including the order in which they should be used. Wouldn't it be good if we could have such information about sex?



Millions of Jews and Christians throughout the world believe that God, the creator of sex, actually inspired such a set of instructions about sex and marriage long ago. In the first book of the Bible, we find this: “*God created man in his own image...male and female He created them.*”¹ From this you can see that, from the beginning, sex, according to God’s plan, was always an essential part of human life.

It also says, “*...the man leaves his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.*”² The Bible uses the strongest possible Hebrew expressions for the words “leave” and “cleave.” Leaving meant the giving up of the intimate relationship between child and parent, giving way to the intimacy of the husband-wife relationship.

This new bond is as unbreakable as the parent-child relationship was.

The Hebrew equivalent of the word “cleave” is an inseparable bonding. Sexual contact is the proof and permanent reminder of the unity and perfect bonding in which husband and wife become one flesh. So the primary purpose of sex is the continuous demonstration and expression of this unity.

Since the purpose of sex is to express the unity which binds a husband and wife in every area of their personality, it will be empty, meaningless and insignificant if commitment is missing from the relationship.

Sex is not the source of unity, but rather its demonstration.

Through sex, the lifelong enduring love that the married couple have committed themselves to is expressed. Looking to sex to provide this kind of commitment does not work.

4. Reasons sex was designed for marriage

15

Discuss in groups.

[Have your students move to sit in circles of no more than five students within groups of only boys and only girls. Give a student in each circle a piece of paper and a pencil. Ask him or her to write one reason sex was designed for marriage, then pass the paper and pencil to the person on his or her right. This person is to add another reason, then pass the paper and pencil on.]

[After five minutes you will collect the papers. Ask your students to remain in these groups and prepare a group answer for the next question. Tell them they will have three minutes to prepare their group answer. Here are the questions:]

¹Genesis 1:27.

²Genesis 2:24.

Boys: Your girlfriend says, “*I love you so much, why wait till marriage to express our love for each other?*”

Girls: Your boyfriend says, “*I love you so much, why wait till marriage to express our love for each other?*”

[After three minutes, ask a group of girls to read their answers. Comment as appropriate, and ask a group of boys to read theirs. Keep alternating and commenting until all the groups have read their answers. Finally, add any of the following they did not mention:]

- Premarital sex can be followed by deep emotional hurt that is frequently carried later into marriage.
- Premarital sex will make it difficult to trust again.
- Premarital sex can result in an STI, reproductive disorders and unexpected pregnancy, resulting in a child being born outside of a stable home.
- Premarital sex is misuse of one’s self and of another person.
- Premarital sex is a partial relationship, not a total one.
- Premarital sex puts the expression of love before the commitment.
- Premarital sex does not promote or provide commitment.

5. Worth the wait—commitment story

5

This story is true, although the names and some of the details have been changed to protect anonymity.

[Read the following story as an example of commitment:]

On her thirteenth birthday, Mara’s parents hinted that they had a special gift for her. Mara spent the day wondering what the gift might be, and hoping that it would be something she’d love.

At dinner that evening, Mara sat with her parents and talked with them. But her mind was only partly focused on the conversation. Part of her mind was still thinking about her promised gift.

Finally, as Mara and her parents finished the meal, Mara’s father placed a small box on the table in front of his daughter. So this was the gift! Mara carefully unwrapped the paper and then opened the box to find a delicate, gold ring inside.

“*How did you know?*” Mara exclaimed as she slipped the ring on her finger. She had seen this ring months before in a store and had loved it immediately—but she couldn’t remember telling her parents about it.

Show the students
the branch of
the rose without
its petals.

"I saw you looking at it," Mara's mother said. "I knew it would be something special for you."

"Actually," said Mara's father, "we would like this ring to be even more special to you than it already is."

Mara's father said. "Mara, we know that you have made a commitment to abstain from (or delay) having sex until you get married. And we want to help you to uphold the commitment you've made."

"We'd like this ring to be a symbol for you of your virginity. It will represent your commitment to maintain your abstinence until marriage. It will be a reminder to you during all the years between now and the time you are married."

Mara is older now, and still treasures her ring. Recently a girlfriend asked Mara about the ring. She answered, "I'm not dating anyone now, but I know that when I do, this ring will be a great reminder of my commitment. Anytime I hold a guy's hand, I feel the ring against his hand, and I'm reminded of my desire to stay abstinent."

"Someday, when I get married, I'm going to give this ring to my husband on our wedding night. And I'll tell him that I have maintained my virginity as a gift to him. I hope that he will give me the gift of his virginity as well." Mara continued to explain that, *"The news tells us that there are a lot of teen pregnancies and STIs. The media seems to send the message that everybody's having sex."* Mara continued, *"But I'm not. And a lot of my friends aren't either."*

Giving away our virginity is similar to giving a manhandled rose to the person we want to live our life with in marriage. If one petal is pulled off, it can never be taken back. It will not be as beautiful as it was originally.

Perhaps you also have arrived to a similar decision like Mara. If so, express this decision in writing to yourself, something like this: *"Since I'm so valuable and my love with a future partner is so important to me, I will wait for him/her and I want to give the most beautiful and meaningful thing to that person that I possibly could give. I want to express my love, my commitment and my faith in our future together."*

Practical Suggestions:

- Though a ring is great, it doesn't need to be a ring or even a tangible object, if you are not comfortable with that. The idea of making a commitment is the main point.
- It must be made clear that for some of your students this option of making an initial commitment is already gone. Remind them that they could start from this point on with a fresh commitment.



Intimate relationships
The Beauty of Love

The Ideal Man and Woman

Supplies:

- magazines
- scissors
- two to four large pieces of poster board
- paste
- markers/crayons/pens

To the teacher: Have students bring (or you bring them for the whole class) old magazines and newspapers with pictures of men and women, as well as lots of words and other objects which could be cut out and pasted on poster board.

Divide the class into boy and girl groups and have each group make a poster which illustrates the ideal man or woman. Allow twelve minutes, then have each group describe their posters. List the most important characteristics they come up with.

You might summarize their findings by using the information that follows and encourage the students to look more than skin deep when beginning a relationship with someone.

What does the other look for?

To the teacher: Divide the class into boys and girls and have them discuss the thoughts listed under their gender as well as the other gender list. Do they think these things are true or false? Do they have things they would like to add?

Have the entire class discuss what they would like the “other group” to know. You might want to remind them that one purpose of dating is to get to know one another better, but not necessarily as a preliminary step to marriage.

Girls:

1. Boys find it more interesting to have to work to win a girl's affections; they like it when the girl is not straightforward and easy, so play a little “hard to get.”
2. Girls have the right to expect guys to respect them by asking them if they can hold their hand, kiss them, hug them before they go ahead and do it.
3. Girls should not try to win a guy by making him jealous. This only hurts everyone involved.
4. If you love something, let it go, and if it comes back to you, it is truly yours. If it does not, it never was yours.
5. If you're in a threesome, don't let the third person feel like the outsider. Make sure you draw them into the conversation. Do not be overly affectionate all the time.
6. No matter what kind of action he's taken, if he hasn't said it in words, don't even think it.
7. Girls should act like ladies in all circumstances, keeping their dignity, not making a scene and not throwing themselves at boys.
8. It's worth waiting for Mr. Right: don't sell yourself short.
9. Know that you are lovable.
10. Don't try to catch a guy by focusing only on your outward appearance.

Boys:

1. Learn how to behave courteously (open doors for girls, help them with their packages and walk on the street side when in public).
2. Call a girl for a date ahead of time (more than 2 days), not at the last minute.
3. Girls respect guys who take the initiative in leading.

4. Be well-groomed.
5. Treat your date like you want your future wife's date to be treating her right now.
6. Girls are not decorations to add to your list of accomplishments. Don't use them to build your ego or improve your reputation.
7. An intimate relationship is not the same as sex. Girls like to hear and know what you are thinking, feeling; this is intimate in their eyes.
8. Don't say things you don't really mean and aren't willing to follow through on.
9. Regularly (more than once a month) express in words what kind of relationship you have, such as friends, more than friends or dating.

Ideas

- Plan a couple of events which will help you get to know others better.
- Observe how your parents interact with each other. Determine what you like and dislike about it. What would you do differently if you were in your parents' shoes, particularly regarding their relationship with one another?
- Ask a very close friend or trusted teacher to tell you what areas you could improve in to become a better communicator and friend.
- Get into small groups and list the elements of a good marriage. What makes a good marriage good?
- Pair up and discuss for five minutes how one can know someone is the "right one," then have the whole class share their opinions with each other.
- Split into two groups (the girls in one group and the boys in another). Give both groups the same questions to answer among themselves. After giving them some time to come up with their opinions, have them share their answers with each other. You could use questions like: What makes a good marriage? What are the husband's responsibilities? What are the wife's responsibilities? Who should manage the money in a marriage? Should both husband and wife work? Should a couple's earnings be available for both, or should each have his own money? Who should have the final word in the couple's decisions? Why?

Trust

To the teacher: this exercise will help the students have a new experience about expressing trust. Call one student to the front and blindfold them. Ask them to stand up very straight with their arms firmly down by their sides. Then have them start to lean backward and tell them they'll be caught by another student. Make sure to choose a capable student who will let them lean and actually begin to fall before catching them. The key to this exercise is that the student falls enough before being caught that they have a chance to doubt. Try to have everyone in the class have a turn "falling" if they are willing.

Discuss the following:

- How did you feel when you were finally caught?
- In a relationship, what makes you feel like you're blindfolded and what makes you uncertain?
- How can you get rid of those feelings?
- What makes you feel secure in the relationship?
- What can you do to make the other person feel safe or secure in the relationship? (You can express with words how you feel towards them; you can talk through conflicts, misunderstandings, hurts; you can learn to communicate better.)

In summary, discuss if they learned that if we communicate better that our relationships will have more trust.



INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS



Part III



The Pain in Relationships



Conflict Management

Difficult Conversations

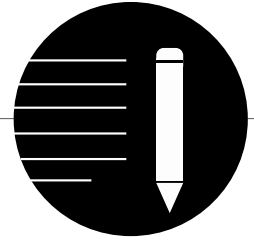
Prejudices: Other People Groups

Prejudices: Minorities

Prejudices: Game

My Parents Are Divorcing!

LESSON PLAN



12.

Intimate Relationships
The Pain in Relationships

Conflict Management

Lesson Plan

Communication pyramid
Story of three girls
The four reactions
Conflict management
Practical application

The Purpose of the Lesson

By the end of this lesson your students should be able to identify the four levels of communicating and name three ingredients necessary for conflict resolution.

1. Communication pyramid

10

Beginning the lesson

Life is full of disagreements and misunderstandings. One of the keys to being happy and successful in life is to understand and practice some principles of good communication. In this lesson we will review some of these principles. We will focus on two aspects of communication that affect our relationships with one another.

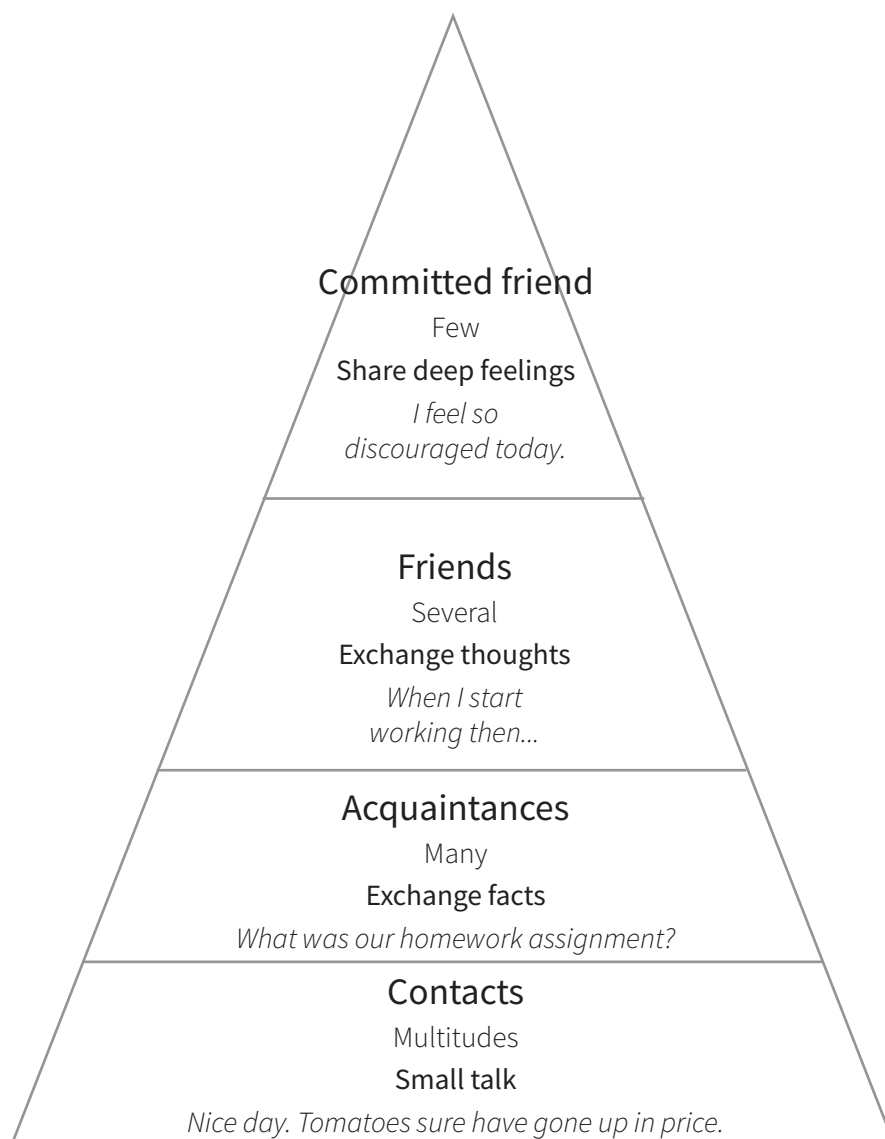
The first issue we want to address is that along with varying personality types there are varying levels of relationships and the types of communication they involve. **As the relationship deepens, the level of communication grows.**

Draw a pyramid on the whiteboard with four levels.

Have students draw a pyramid on their papers and take notes as you proceed. Start at the top of the pyramid as you begin describing the different levels.

Write in the name and brief description of each one as you talk about it. Ask the students to give you examples of what kind of conversation this might include. (Descriptions of each level are below the example pyramid.)

You can find a detailed description of this pyramid in the “Friends for Life” lesson.



2. Story of three girls

5

“Don’t let the sun go down on your anger.”

There were two really close friends, Kathy and Jane, who lived far away from each other. These friends were very close and shared many of their most secret thoughts with each other. They laughed at the same things, enjoyed the same things and yet challenged each other to become better people than they were. A long weekend was coming up and Kathy planned to visit Jane. Kathy was looking forward to spending some quality time with Jane, but when she got there another close friend of Jane’s, Susie, was already there. Kathy was disappointed and emotionally distanced herself from Susie. She was polite to Susie, but did not warm up to her very readily. After dinner Kathy went to visit some other friends in the same town and came home just in time to go to bed.

In the morning as Kathy was getting ready for breakfast, she noticed Susie was packing to go home. She would not say why she was leaving and both Kathy and Jane tried to persuade her to stay. Kathy was looking forward to getting to know Susie now that she had gotten used to the idea of all three of them being together for the weekend. However, Susie insisted on leaving anyway.

Jane called Susie at home and learned why she had left. Afterward Jane told Kathy that Susie felt like Kathy did not like her, and that was the reason she left. Jane asked Kathy if this were true, and Kathy explained that initially she was irritated about Susie being there, but she never indicated that to Susie. She added that her problem was not with Susie, it was with the fact that Jane had not mentioned that there would be another person there that weekend. Jane ignored the last comment and took Susie’s side. She chided Kathy for being so insensitive and was mad at Kathy the rest of the weekend.

Even though they talked about it, Kathy felt betrayed by Jane. It seemed she had believed Susie’s word against her own. Kathy decided that she must not mean all that much to Jane, so she moved her from the deepest category of committed friendship back to just friends. She quit sharing her feelings and deepest thoughts with her and gradually communicated less and less with her. Eventually, they got to the point where they hardly ever wrote or talked to one another.

Have the students discuss these questions in pairs. After five minutes have a few of them share their answers with the rest of the class and then go on.

- Do you think Kathy was right in doing this?
- Why or why not?
- Do you think Susie was right to leave without giving Kathy a chance to explain her attitude?
- Do you think Jane was right to take Susie’s side? What would you have done to resolve this situation?



Conflict is not bad, we just need to know how to handle it! In this case, the conflict was not handled well by any of those involved. When conflict is not handled well, the results can negatively influence how we relate to that person in the future. We may continue adding to the list of reasons why that person is unlovable and unforgivable every time we encounter something even slightly negative about them. This could bring us to the point of hating even the sight of them. If this person is someone we see daily, our lives can become one big pile of misery and anger. It is not worth it; deal with those conflicts when they occur!

The deeper a relationship gets, the more possible it is that conflicts will happen.

Unresolved conflicts can ruin a relationship.

3. The four reactions

10

Divide the class into groups of four people. Place a piece of candy (or some other item most students would want to have for themselves) in the center of the group, along with an envelope containing four slips of paper. Each member of the group should take one piece of paper out of the envelope and read it silently. They should behave in the group as their paper instructs.

Lets look at a more personal example of how to solve conflict. After that we will discuss how to develop important skills in this critical area of our life. The principles we will discuss in this lesson are valid in every relationship, including friends, classmates, teachers, parents, etc.

Game

[The envelope should contain four pieces of paper, each with one of the following statements on it:

1. Once the discussion begins, do not give your opinion or any ideas to the group about how the candy should be divided. They will not listen anyway. Do not even talk to them. Turn away and do not participate in the conversation.
2. Make sure you end up with the whole piece of candy for yourself. You deserve it.
3. Timidly state your opinion and then give in to the others; do not insist on your own way. They are stronger than you so you might as well let them have their way. Do not take any of the candy if someone else wants it.
4. If you think at least one other person in the group wants the candy, too, try to come up with some solution; that is not what you would really like, but is better than nothing.]

Withdrawal

The first slip of paper illustrated a person who withdraws during conflict. This person hates being in arguments. They would rather leave the room or just sit there mutely while the other person goes on and on about what happened or how they feel. This person is usually saying a lot of things to himself, but the words never get out of his mouth. This person could be afraid to say what they think or they may know that there is no point to saying anything because the discussion will end up in a yelling match that won't get them anywhere.

I win, you lose

The second slip of paper illustrated a person who thinks they are always right. They may be loud and demanding or just good manipulators. They always want to be the one who has the last word in a fight. They always insist that their way of looking at the situation is the only way it could be viewed and everyone else should agree with them. They do not really care what others feel about the situation or their viewpoints, they only care about what they feel and think.

Compliant

This is the third slip of paper. This person may share his viewpoint quietly, politely, but quickly gives in to others' opinions if they are in disagreement. This person has a definite opinion, but does not voice it as strongly as it is felt. A compliant person would rather let someone else have their way than endure an argument. The stress of trying to convince others of a better way is not worth it. Just let them do what they want.

Compromise

This was illustrated by the fourth piece of paper. This type of person sees that they cannot expect to get 100% of what they want, the way they want it, so they are willing to settle for something less. This solution is many times not satisfactory to either party and leaves them with a feeling of settling for something less than they wanted. Both may leave the discussion unsatisfied and a little begrudging of the other person.

4. Conflict management

10

Mutual agreement

This type of conflict resolution was not illustrated in our game. Mutual agreement means that the problem is openly and honestly discussed by

both parties. Each listens and hears what the others are saying and as they go through a series of give and take, they come to a conclusion that is satisfying to all parties involved. When they go away from this discussion each person has a good feeling that this was indeed the very best way to resolve the conflict. It could not have been any better. Their relationship stays intact. This kind of result takes time and commitment on the part of all those involved. It is not easy to discuss situations in which both parties are very attached to the outcome. There are three things that might help us be more like this last person.

1. Attitude

Three aspects of attitude are important to note here. You should enter a conflict discussion with the attitude of wanting to find a solution to the problem that is a mutually satisfying solution, not just the solution you prefer. This means you have to be open to hear the other person's point of view and be willing to look at the problem from his or her perspective.

Second, you need an open, accepting and humble spirit. Remember that whatever someone does always makes sense to that person! In conflict situations, the difficulties usually lie in the fact that there are two or more "logical" people with "logical" ways of doing things. In resolving conflict, we need to find out where our "logic" differs from each other and resolve the situation accordingly. You may also need to realize that you could be wrong! It may be that your interpretation of what happened is totally inaccurate. You need to be willing to discover that the wrong assumptions were made and, therefore, the wrong conclusions were reached. In our initial story, Susie was wrong to assume that Kathy hated her and then leave before finding out if it were really true. Humility includes being strong enough to be able to face the true facts and, if appropriate, admit that we are wrong!

Third, it is important to put our emotions aside for the moment and stick to the facts. Emotions can very quickly cloud a very simple and straightforward issue. When talking through a difficult situation with others, strive to talk about it objectively. Think of the issue as an outsider might and approach the discussion in that way.

2. Approach

Check the facts. Ask questions. Find out if your assumptions are correct. Enter the discussion with a desire to discover the reasons that whatever was said or done made sense to them at the time. Be prepared to explain your reasons in the same way.

We need to be careful with our words. Words can hurt others if they are said in haste and without forethought. Objectively explain how you felt about what happened. This will help the other person keep from feeling defensive about your accusations.

Use phrases like:

- When...happened, I felt like...
- When you said...I felt...
- It seemed like...
- I'm sure you had a good reason for..., but when it happened I felt...
- I'm sure you didn't realize this, but that...had sentimental value to me...
- I'm sure you weren't aware that...
- To make sure I understood you correctly, let me repeat back to you what I heard you say...
- By that do you mean...
- How did you feel about...
- What can I do to make it right?

Do not use condemning language like:

- You did...
- You made me...
- If you wouldn't have...
- You should have...
- Why didn't you...?
- How could you...?

3. Action

We need to take action and express our feelings to the right person. When a conflict arises there are several things to keep in mind:

Do not gossip!

When a conflict arises make sure you do not complain to someone else about it before you have gone to the person directly in an effort to resolve your differences. Telling other people before resolving an issue with someone amounts to gossip and will make it harder to resolve the issue at a later date. Gossip can also influence your reputation or other people's reputations (positively or negatively) with information that is untrue. The stories that begin to circulate in this manner can be very detrimental and are nearly impossible to rectify.

Pick a time and place

Sometimes it is appropriate to discuss the issue as soon as the conflict arises. At other times emotions are so high it is better to set a later time to talk

it through. One person may have done something of which the other person is unaware. In this case, this person who is hurt needs to go to them and schedule a time and place to talk. Occasionally, we become aware that our relationship with someone is not what it used to be. We need to determine if that is true and then set a time to talk further about it.

We need to say, *“Our friendship means a lot to me and I don’t want something like this to get in the way of it. Let’s sit down and talk this over.”*

“Our relationship is worth more than letting a thing like this get in its way. Let’s get together and work this out.”

“It seems you have been avoiding me. Have I done something to hurt you?”

“You seem distant lately, have I done something to make you doubt our friendship?”

Try to pick a time when neither one of you is rushed or feeling under pressure because of other things in your lives. Choose a quiet place where you can remain undisturbed for the duration of your discussion. Turn off your phone.

Define the issue

Start by affirming the importance of your relationship. Then begin by both of you clearly stating the problem. Sometimes determining the problem is the hardest part of the discussion. Be calm, objective and non-accusative.

Resolve the issue

Remain cool and calm as you continue to discuss the issue and do not allow your emotions to get the upper hand. Do not stray from the subject. Talk about the problem with the goal in mind of finding a solution that will be satisfactory to both of you. Resolve hurt feelings by giving or asking forgiveness when it is appropriate. Be straightforward in expressing how you feel without condemning the other person. Allow them a chance to ask for forgiveness, but even if they choose not to do so, you can take the first step and forgive them silently in your heart. Even though this may not seem fair, the fact is that you will suffer for it if you refuse to forgive. If you cannot or do not forgive someone for hurt they have caused you, the hurt will fester and imprison your soul. Over time you will become filled with bitterness and anger toward life in general. This attitude will soak into all of your relationships and bring them to ruin. We have all met bitter, angry people and it is no fun to be around them. Ancient wisdom speaks about not letting the sun go down on your anger and of forgiving 70x7 times, if necessary. The point is that forgiveness really is good for the soul! Anger or desire for retribution does not remove the pain of what happened to us, but it can actually cause even more damage.

If the disagreement involved how you handled a certain situation or used certain items, talk through what happened and what each of you thinks would be the “logical” thing to do any time this situation occurs in the future. Go



through a process of give and take until you both agree on the best way to handle this issue. You might want to each state to the other person what you agreed upon to be sure what you heard is what they meant.

Two in a relationship can mature through resolving their conflicts together.

5. Practical application

10

Divide the students into five groups and assign a story to each of the groups for them to read and discuss.

Living free of conflict gives us more energy to devote to living our everyday lives. We won't wake up every morning worried or burdened by things from the past that, over time, seem to grow into ever larger and more pressing issues in our lives. These things have a way of developing vines which eventually wind around our hearts and choke our whole lives and relationships with bitterness and anger. If you want to be a person who experiences the most out of life, let go of the anger and your right to revenge. The payment it demands for your allegiance is much more than it is worth.

[Take a little time to practice some of the things we talked about today. Divide the class as noted and have them discuss these hypothetical situations.]

Sara and Paula

Sara and Paula are both attracted to Jack. Sara talks about how she feels before Paula does, so Paula does not say anything about her own feelings for Jack. One day Jack starts talking to Paula at school and asks her if she would like him to walk her home. She says she usually walks home with Sara, but he could come with both of them. While walking home, Jack walks beside Paula and talks mostly with her. The next day Sara is really mad at Paula and will not even talk to her...

- How would you resolve this situation?
- Who should go to whom?
- What should they say?
- What would you do in Sara's situation?
- What would you do in Paula's situation?

Sam and Joe

Sam and Joe have been best friends since they were young. Sam has always been more daring than Joe, which is one of the reasons Joe has always liked being around him. It makes life more fun and interesting! Lately Sam has been getting in with a "bad crowd." They smoke and drink and there is gossip

that they even do drugs. Their influence is starting to show in Sam's life. He doesn't study like he should, he's belligerent and uncooperative in school and at home. Sam just does not seem to have the joy of life that he had in the past. Joe is feeling like their friendship is starting to unravel after all these years.

- In Joe's place, what would you do?
- How would you approach Sam?
- Would you address his change in behavior, as well as your friendship?
- Why or why not?

Mike and Sally

Mike and Sally have been going together for a while. They love spending time together. They can talk for hours about the many common interests and dreams they have. It is so fun to have someone like that who is a real "soul mate." Since Mike and Sally will both graduate this year from high school, they plan to go on to university. Mike wants to be a doctor; Sally wants to be a nurse.

The university where Mike can prepare for a career as a doctor is in a city far away. As a matter of fact, when he goes off to university in the fall, it means he probably will not return home until he completes his studies. Unfortunately, the university where Sally can achieve her education is in another part of the country. If they attend these schools, they will not see each other for several years.

Sally is afraid Mike will forget her and marry someone else. Sally thinks she and Mike should get married this summer and that Mike should give up his dream of becoming a doctor.

Mike's heart is committed to Sally and he knows no other woman could be of interest to him, even if it takes years until they can be together again. Mike thinks they should just go get their education behind them at separate schools and then get married and settle down afterwards.

- If you were in their shoes, how would you resolve the conflict?
- What are the issues involved in this conflict?
- Is it just that they will be separated for many years?

Susan and David

Susan is in high school and has been invited to a party across town. The party will not be over until after 1 am, but it is the most important party of the whole year. A really good friend of hers, David, said he would be glad to escort her home afterwards. Susan's parents, however, do not trust David. He has long hair and piercings and seems a little wild to them, even though he is a good student and comes from a good family. Susan's parents have said she cannot

go to the party until she has a more suitable escort home or she is willing to call them to come pick her up when the party is over. Susan thinks her escort is fine and it would be embarrassing to have her parents pick her up from the party.

- How would you resolve this conflict?

Jack and Mary

Jack is a great student. He does really well in all his subjects and even gets teased about how smart he is. He has been noticing a girl, Mary, in his class for several months now, but she seems to ignore his efforts to be friends with her.

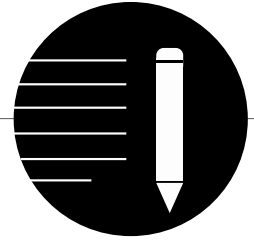
One day Mary comes to him to ask for his help. She is an average student and is pretty faithful at getting her work done on time. However, the day before a paper is due, Mary realizes she forgot about it. She has several classes and she is scheduled to work after school so she asks Jack if he would help her out just this once and write the paper for her.

Jack hates it when people ask him to do their work for them, because he knows they are just using him. He has gotten in trouble before for doing something like this and is afraid to risk doing it again; but how can he say “No” to the girl he has been trying for months to get to know?

- What would you do in his situation?
- What alternatives could you offer instead of writing the paper for her?
- What would you say to her?

[After the small groups, bring the class together and have groups share their suggestions for resolving these kinds of situations.]

LESSON PLAN



13.

Intimate relationships
The Pain in Relationships

Difficult Conversations

Lesson Plan

Introductory questions
The three types of
conversation
Effective confrontation

The Purpose of the Lesson

By the end of the lesson your students will understand why we become angry, how we can manage our anger, learn to prepare for difficult conversations and how they can have a successful confrontation.

1. Introductory questions

5

- Why do we avoid people who are always negative, angry, are difficult to get along with and who look down on others?
- Why do we tend to become angry or start defending ourselves when we are confronted with things that we should change?
- Tell each other about conflict situations in small groups and discuss how you would handle them.

2. The three types of conversation

25

The three types of conflict discussions

1. Facts. 'What happened?' conversations.

Many times there is a conflict because different pieces of the story are available to the different parties involved. If you calmly share what information you know, the conflict can disappear.

1. State the facts. Forget about 'Who is right?'
2. Don't suppose that the other person deliberately chose their interpretation. Separate the intention from the consequences.
3. Don't rebuke or scold the other person.
4. Be willing to learn as you join the conversation!

2. Emotions. 'What do I feel?' conversations.

Arguments can be exclusively about emotions. In such situations you must come to the agreement that neither party is right, but you can have different feelings about the same thing. You simply have to understand and accept the other's different viewpoint.

1. What story am I telling myself? How do I interpret the happenings for myself?
2. How much of my feelings are based on assumptions I have about the other person's issues?
3. What is my part in the development of the problem?

3. Self-identity. 'What do I risk?' conversations.

The difficult ones are conversations where the other person questions your very person, e.g., your integrity or good intention. It is especially important in

Discuss the situation in small groups and try to prepare for the conflict resolution conversation based on the following questions:

such situations to be firmly aware of your worth, but also know that you are not perfect, and some of the criticism is probably justified.

1. What do I risk about my self-identity in this situation? There are three basic self-identity questions that have to be answered: Do I fit the requirements? Am I a good person? Am I lovable?
2. Accept the following facts about yourself: a) You are going to make mistakes. b) Your intentions are complex. c) You also contribute to the emergence of conflicts.
3. How can I reveal issues during a discussion that affect my self-identity?

Case study

During a shared task your classmate regularly misses the deadline and submits poor quality work.

- What is their side of the story?
- What kind of mistaken assumptions could you have in such a situation?
- What is your share of the problem?
- How does the story sound from your viewpoint?

How can you prepare for a conversation where you discuss the conflict based on the above?

1. Try to figure out what actually happened. What is your partner's story and what is your story?
2. Consider your emotions as well as theirs!
3. Consider what could affect their identity and yours.
4. Examine your intentions and decide whether you want to bring up the topic or not.

3. Effective confrontation

15

If you have decided to have this difficult conversation, don't control the response of the other person, but honestly seek to learn from them. Also, you shouldn't let your emotions take control over you. Non-verbally: be calm in your demeanor, look the other person in the eye, talk quietly and gently, and listen to them without any interruptions. Verbally: don't defend yourself and agree with as much as you can. Seek to assume the best intention from the other person. If necessary, ask them to clarify their message. Listen to what they consider to be the facts. Share with them how you felt and listen to how they felt, too. There are a number of good principles in the famous chapter (1 Corinthians 13) on love in the Bible, written by apostle Paul:



“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”¹

Engage in the conversation with an attitude of openness to learn.

- Don’t think that you are right about everything.
- Resist the temptation to express everything that has been bothering you.
- Share your problem in a way that will NOT FORCE the other party into defense.
- Separate between the three conversation types.
- Three key principles: 1. Forgiveness is the basis for all relationships. 2. You will need humility, sincerity, transparency, straightforwardness and love. 3. You should maintain a good self-image and seek to have a positive effect on the self-image of the other person.

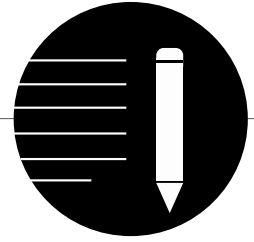
It is important to clarify a few things before engaging in a conflict-resolution conversation.

- Is it absolutely required?
- Could it be that you only need to be more patient with one of their weaknesses?
- Will this conversation help them see the issue(s)?
- Am I too prone to confront others or do I rather avoid conflicts?
- Do I share the truth in love, or do I want to only humiliate the other person?
- Do I want to take revenge for pain that was inflicted on me?
- Do I honestly want to communicate something where change could be helpful to the other person and also to the relationship?

Positive manner	Negative manner
clarification	argument
listening	accusation
asking for change	making claims

¹1 Corinthians 13:4-8a.

LESSON PLAN



14.

Intimate Relationships
The Pain in Relationships

Prejudices: Other People Groups

Lesson Plan

Family mathematics
Family geography
Clarification of concepts
Lost tourists
Prejudices in practice

The Purpose of the Lesson

By the end of the lesson your students can better understand their family background and the complexity of the past and the present; they can understand the concepts of “stereotype,” “prejudice” and “racism;” and they can recognize that prejudices are baseless and realize their dangers and adverse effects.

1. Family mathematics

10

All students should have a piece of paper to write down their family tree.

Listen to some answers before sharing the answer to the last question.

Feel free to find other more relatable genetic ancestry if you wish.

Due to our family background we are all “products” of an extremely complex past. What we have become is much more defined by our family’s recent social and cultural circumstances than our “bloodline.”

In order to better understand this, we will dedicate the next couple of minutes to better understanding our own families. There are some very simple questions in the beginning, followed by some more complex ones.

- Write down the name of your parents and above their names, the name of your grandparents. How many grandparents do you have? Four. Write this number in the same line where you put their names.
- Who were their parents? How many great-grandparents do you have? (8 great-grandparents, 16 great-great-grandparents, 32, 64, 128, great-great-great-great...parents, etc.)
- What is the time span between generations? (This generally is thought to be the years during which children are born and grow up, become adults and begin to have children.)
- How many years is that? (It depends on the given era; currently there are approximately 30 years between parents and their children.)
- Ten generations ago (about 250 years ago), how many ancestors did you have? (The answer is approximately 1000; more precisely it could be $-2^{10} = 1024$. Of course, there may be some shifts with one branch of the family being the 8th and the other already the 13th generation, going backwards.)
- Or how many ancestors did you have 20 generations ago (about 600 years ago)? (The answer: approximately 1 million, since all your 1000 ancestors had 1000 ancestors 10 generations earlier.)
- And how about 30 generations ago (about 900 years ago)? (The answer: about 1 billion.)
- Here comes the really difficult question. How was it all possible when the population of the entire planet didn’t even reach 400 million back then?

It was possible because the same people must have been our ancestors multiple times. They must have married their cousins, mostly without being aware of it. It is very likely that you have a couple of distant cousins sitting here in this classroom, which means that your ancestors are also their ancestors.

It is also clear that there are many different ancestors who came from many different places. For example, in terms of genetics, the Hungarian population today is made up from about a third Western Europeans (Germans, Italians,

etc., which is in Central Europe), a third Eastern Europeans (Russians, Poles, Ukrainians, etc.) and about a third Southern European and Middle Eastern origin (Greeks, Turks, Jewish and Arabic people). Hungarians most resemble Austrians; there is hardly any genetic distinction between the two people groups. The Asian origin in the genetic character (from the Ural Mountains, Siberia and the Caucasus) is based on the ancient history of Hungarians and is insignificant, only a small percent. It doesn't mean that linguists who claim that Hungarian belongs to the Finno-Ugric language family were wrong. Neither does it mean that archaeologists are wrong when they claim that Hungarians lived as nomadic shepherds, wandering on the South-Eastern European steppes, living together with the Huns, Avars, Khazars and other similar people groups. It simply means that over 1000 years in the heart of Europe, Hungarians got mixed with many different types of people. Therefore the 'blood' of this genetic pool is simply "Central European" today.¹

2. Family geography

5

To the teacher:
this is an exercise
that works well in
the context of a
Hungarian class.
Please adjust it
according to the
cultures of your
particular class.
Allow the students
time to discuss their
roots/names as
much as they can.

This is just one
example of how
different ethnicities
and names have
developed in a
geographical area.

First, the whole
class participates,
then the
conversations
can be continued
in small groups
or pairs.

For example, most Hungarian family names originate from the name of people groups: Horvath, Toth, Nemeth, etc.

- Give examples for family names that originate from the name of ethnic groups.
- Where do these people groups live today?

If someone has an ancestor with such a name, it is almost certain that they used to be a "minority" somewhere in the past. If everyone was Croat in a village, no one received the Hungarian equivalent for it as a family name, since people couldn't be distinguished that way.

- Who of you have Nemeths (Germans) in your family? Toths (Slovaks)? Racz (Serbians)? Horvaths (Croatians)? Török (Turkish)? Szász (Saxon), Lengyel (Polish), Orosz (Russian), etc.?
- Based on your country's majority culture, what other people groups or ethnicities could be there? Does your last name come from the name of a rare, special people group? (The point is for the students to find others with similar family names.)

We also frequently have foreign family names: Demcsák, Hoffmann, Janics, etc. There used to be many more of these names (especially in cities), but in the 20th century many of them changed their names to something that sounds more Hungarian. For example, in 1910 the Ferencváros Sports Club had a soccer team consisting of players with the following family names: Fritz, Rumbold, Manglitz, Weinber, Bródy, Gorszky, Kucsera, Weisz, Koródy,

¹Source and further information at <https://brilliantmaps.com/the-genetic-map-of-europe/>, accessed July 20, 2016.

Schlosser, Szeitler. Two Hungarian names out of 11 which might have already been changed to this Hungarian sounding version. (Back then there weren't players purchased from other soccer teams from other countries! Such were the names of average people in the Ferencváros, a district of working-class people in Budapest.)

- Identify which people had foreign names? For example, German names like Müller or Schmitt? Or Slavic names that end with -ich, -ov or -sky?
- Who has a last name that is clearly not from the majority culture, but you don't know where it's from? (Once again, the point is for students to find other students with similar family names.)

From these many names you must find one that is represented already in someone's else family. Sit together and discuss where and when did your ancestors live. You may learn some interesting connections.

- Ex: What could it feel like living as the only Racz (Serbian) family in a fully Hungarian village? Or as the only Hungarian in the midst of a fully Slovak population? What could be the reason that so many people changed their names, for example from Müller to Molnár or from Stefanovics to Istvánffy?

3. Clarification of definitions

10

Listen to some answers and if the students haven't mentioned it, say the following:

- What does the word **stereotype** mean?

A stereotype is a superficial generalization, thought pattern and common place type of opinion. For example, "professors are absent-minded" or "dogs are loyal animals." There could be some truth to it, but it is not always true and not to the extent that we tend to think. Usually we hear such statements from others and adopt them without having our own experience or checking their truth.

- Give some examples for positive, negative and neutral stereotypes.
- What does the word **prejudice** mean?

Listen to some answers and if the students haven't mentioned it, say the following:

Prejudice is a stereotype that is usually severely negative, and it determines your behavior and attitude towards some people groups (e.g., nations, nationalities, professions, religions and genders). As the word suggests, you make a judgment of someone or some people groups before getting to know the real and concrete facts.

- Give some examples for prejudices.
- What does the word **racism** mean?

Listen to some answers and if the students haven't mentioned it, say the following:

Racism is a type of prejudice that is based on biological characteristics. It states that the lower or higher standing of certain people groups is genetically encoded and naturally given—therefore it is necessary and immutable. **This idea has no scientific basis whatsoever!** It is absolutely clear that the entire human race belongs to one species, and if the right conditions are provided anyone is capable of the same intellectual or spiritual accomplishments irrespective of their complexion, body or face type. It is true that there are people groups that produced fewer famous scientists or artists, but this is obviously subject to their less fortunate learning and financial opportunities. There are countless examples which prove that the children of any nation can reach identical results when provided with equally favorable conditions.

All people belong to the same species, we are all homo sapiens. Irrespective of their place of origin, complexion or body type, all people groups have the same intellectual, spiritual, emotional and social skills and potential, and they deserve the same level of human dignity and rights. There are no valuable and less valuable, higher and lower “species.” The cultural, economic and social differences between different people groups arise not from biological or genetic differences, but from processes and effects that date back centuries. This is why these changes can be—albeit slowly—influenced and even accelerated with a conscious effort. The Finns were one of the most disadvantaged, poorest people group of Europe, with the worst health condition about 100-200 years ago, but today—thanks to the improvements of the education system and some other well-targeted measures—Finland has become one of the richest and most livable countries in the world.

4. Lost tourists



Give a card to each of the three volunteers (preferably with good acting skills) with the following text. (We are aware that these are stereotypical generalizations of these nationalities.)

Game—stereotypes

ITALIAN	VIETNAMESE	ENGLISH
loud	quiet	polite
friendly	modest	reserved
cheerful	adaptive	level-headed
enthusiastic	respectful	dry-humored

[The three participants should act as they were standing at a bus stop and they would like to get to the same hotel, but they can't make sense of the instructions and signs. The other students should figure out who is from where based on their behavior.]

[All three of them should speak normally. They are not to use their distinctive accents, but the “national character types” indicated on the cards, which, of course, are stereotypes!]

5. Prejudices in practice

10

The first couple of examples may be easy to figure out. It's great if there is a lively discussion during the task. The best is when the students themselves question and refute each other's prejudices and make them relative.

In the following you'll see how other nations think about certain European people groups. Guess what comment describes which people group.

1. They tend to be loud, to talk very fast and can talk a lot. Their women are crazy about fashion, while the men are devoted soccer fans. They eat spaghetti and pizza and they also drink wine. (Italians)
2. They are diligent, economical and they try to save money. They live a simple life. They are very precise. (Swedish)

Summary

Many times, it is your prejudices that prevent you from seeing reality because you only notice what fits in your prejudice; therefore, your prejudices are strengthened, but you will not notice aspects that would refute them. When it comes to the functioning of the human brain, once you have learned a certain mindset (e.g., the Irishman are beer drinkers), you tend to notice those facts that more easily fit into this framework. You might be seeing an Irishman enjoying his pint and you could say to yourself, *“Oh, yes, it's indeed true...”* But when you come across an Irish person sipping coffee, you could think that they are only an exception. Stereotypes most often have a grain of truth in them (e.g., beer consumption per capita is indeed high in Ireland), but they tend to overly exaggerate or generalize (since there could be millions of Irish citizens who hate beer or never consume any alcohol).

The other problem is that the prejudices tend to describe the person saying that given prejudice or stereotype. They very often stem from envy and inferiority complexes: *“X people group is richer and more successful (which might not even be true in general) because they are shrewd, they exploit others, they are materialistic, they cooperate and join forces against us.”* Another type of stereotype originates from a sense of superiority and looking down on others: *“The X people are ignorant, primitive, undisciplined and unreliable.”* Such beliefs led to horrific wars and genocides in history.

In the Judeo-Christian western culture that YTL also represents, every human being is equal and has equal rights. This can be traced back to the fact that everyone bears the image of God² and every person was created from one

²Genesis 1-2.

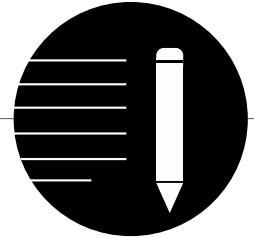
man. According to Christianity (and Judaism) the equality of the human race can be traced back to the Creator God. In the Bible we read that “*from one man he made all the nations.*”³

The topic of the Lesson titled *Golden Rule*—“*Do to others as you would like them to do to you,*”⁴ **is true for all men:** we should relate to every people group, race, gender, religion or minority, based on this principle.

³Acts 17:26.

⁴Luke 6:31.

LESSON PLAN



15.

Intimate Relationships
The Pain in Relationships

Prejudices: Minorities

Lesson Plan

What groups are
you a member of?
“Minorities” in the
classroom
Tug of war

The Purpose of the Lesson

By the end of the lesson your students learn that we are all members of a number of different groups, including minorities. They are warned that the “majority” at any time should act wisely and not exploit their position because anyone can end up as a “minority.”

1. What groups are you a member of?

10

Allow the students three minutes to write down their answers.

If there are interesting and unexpected connection points, allow the students to talk about them.

Take a piece of paper and in 3 minutes write down as many groups that you are a member of as you can recall; e.g., *I'm a member of X family, a student at Y school, live in Z neighborhood, a girl, I play handball, love metal music, have red hair, etc.*

The one who can list the most groups wins. (Different characteristics of the same feature don't count as separate groups, so, if you have already written down that 'I am 16 years old,' you cannot add a group that's called 'Younger than 20.')

- Who collected more than 20 groups?... Over 30?... And over 40?...
- Who can identify a group that they believe they are the only ones to belong to from the class?
- Is it really the case? That no one belongs to this group?

2. "Minorities" in the classroom

15

Form groups and give a number to each of the groups.

You will need one piece of poster board per group.

If you don't have time to discuss each team's description, select some group pairs or you can organize circles consisting of 3 groups that share their descriptions with each other.

[You can take different aspects into consideration when numbering the groups. If there are groups that consist of only girls or boys, you can arrange for the boy groups to evaluate girl groups and vice versa. If there are strong cliques that have formed, make sure that it wouldn't be either their "enemy" nor the group closest to them to give the description, but it should be a group they are not very well acquainted with if possible.]

1. Form groups of 3 or 4 based on a common denominator you have. Preferably try to find people with characteristics that are typical only of you in the class (e.g., you commute by school bus, you are in AP literature or you are fans of the same soccer team).
2. Write down your common denominator on the poster board and place it in a clearly visible place on the desk.
3. Afterwards, write down on another piece of paper as many true facts about yourselves as a group as you can.
4. Now Group 1 should describe Group 2 on a separate piece of paper, Group 2 should describe Group 3 and this last Group should describe Group 1. Based on the shared description of the other Group, write down what you believe to be true for the given group. You should consider the name of the group, not the specific members when you make your observations.

5. Group 1 should tell (to the whole class) how they described Group 2, then Group 2 should share what they have written down about themselves. How are the two descriptions similar or different from each other? Why? How does the evaluation of Group 1 affect the members of Group 2?

3. Tug of war

20

For this game you will need ropes that are suitable for a tug of war competition.

[Arrange the room so there would be enough space for a tug of war or go outside. Appoint the different teams in a similar way to this: "People who are wearing jeans should go to the right end of the rope and the rest should go to the left," or "If you were born before April go to the right, people born in May or afterwards should go to the left." The teams don't have to be balanced, in fact, it is better if one of the groups is much stronger than the other one. But try to make sure that a) everyone is part of the losing side every now and then; b) if there are disadvantaged students they could define criteria that would enable them to win as many times as possible; c) don't set conditions that could be painful or inconsiderate for the participants. (E.g., only set glasses as a criterion if the majority of the students wear glasses.) If there is enough time do at least 5-6, or even better, 8-10 rounds of competition, always with newly formed teams.]

- What did it feel like to be on the winning team? What did it feel like to be part of the losing team?
- Who was most often on the winning team?
- Do you think they deserve any reward for their victory?

Summary

The winners will not get a reward because they could not have known what the selection criteria for the teams would be. **They have no merit whatsoever in mostly belonging to the majority by accident.** That is often how life is. As you saw in the first game, we are all members of numerous groups. Some of these groups were chosen by us; we fought to belong and worked hard for our achievements. On the other hand, some other group members are a given, they were born with us or things happened in a certain way, but there is nothing we can do about it.

Any group can become a minority in any specific situation. In history many times the fact that people belong to a certain group seems beneficial for a while, but then all of a sudden it can become a disadvantage. After the Versailles Treaty approximately 3 million Hungarians became a minority who used to form the majority population in Hungary before World War I. During

World War II hundreds of thousands of Jews and Gypsies were persecuted, and during Communism people who previously enjoyed some special advantages were now persecuted. If you have an open approach, it's not only the history of people groups, but your personal experience that will also teach you that your luck can change. The party who is in the winning position, who forms the majority, could choose to exploit their situation to the fullest or they could exercise generosity by accepting minorities and opt for cooperation with them. It is not difficult to see that smaller communities (the family, neighbors, class, etc.), as well as larger ones, could have a more peaceful and happy existence if they choose the latter approach.

In this light, it may be worth considering **what areas of your life you are in a “majority” and “minority” position**. As “majority,” who do you consider to be the minority and how do you relate to them? As “minority,” what attitude would you like to see from the “majority”? And don't forget about the Golden Rule: *“Do to others as you would have them to do to you.”*¹

¹Luke 6:31.



Intimate Relationships The Pain in Relationships

Prejudices: Game

The Purpose of the Game:

To present how labels influence us and that it's worth getting to know the other person before we form an opinion about them.

Background:

Labels help our brain to process different pieces of information and events. They often replace thinking and getting to know the other. When labels are your only source of information, you will look at people from only one perspective.

Preparation:

- On the next page you will find a table on “Labels.”
- Make a photocopy of the page and cut the paper into cells.
- Divide the class into groups of 4.
- Give each group 4 Person Cards and 8 Object Cards. Don’t give the students the Fact Cards.

Task:

The students are going to buy gifts for these 4 relatives out of the 8 available gifts.

Questions:

- Who gave the leather jacket to Uncle Theodore?
- Who gave the tattoo to cousin Tom?
- Who gave the rocking chair to Aunt Ellie?
- How did you decide what they should get as a present?
- Did the labels under the names influence your decisions?

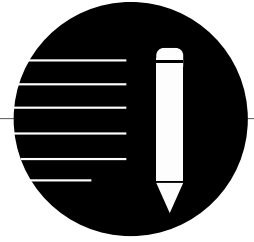
Share the Fact Cards with the students so they can finalize their choices.

- What were the final gift choices? Why?
- Did the newly received information influence your decision?
- What happens if you lean on labels too much?
- If you don’t know a person very well, but you are to give them a gift, what would be a good choice?
- If a new student joined the class, what would you do to help them feel welcome?
- In what situations is it better to get to know the person before forming an opinion?

Cards to the “Labels” Game

Uncle Theodore	Aunt Lizzie	Cousin Tom	Aunt Ellie
rides the motorbike	works as a librarian	is a soldier	is retired
coffee mug	tattoo	alarm clock	book
dictionary	rocking chair	leather jacket	theater tickets
FACT	FACT	FACT	FACT
Aunt Ellie loves modern fashion, for example, leather apparel.	After leaving the Army, Tom would like to see if he has what it takes to become an actor.	Uncle Theodore collects antique furniture.	Aunt Lizzie was always very rebellious; she is the dare-devil of the family.

LESSON PLAN



16.

Intimate Relationships
The Pain in Relationships

My Parents Are Divorcing!

Lesson Plan

Small Group discussion

Facts about divorce

Role Play

The Purpose of the Lesson

By the end of the lesson we would like your students to understand why their parents might have divorced and to clearly see that this is in no way their fault. We want the children to understand some important facts about divorce and equip them with tools to express their feelings with respect to the divorce of their parents.

1. Small group discussion

15

Divide the class into small groups (maximum 5-6/group). Ask the groups to write down three reasons why people get divorced and three methods for how divorce could be prevented. After a few minutes, each group should share what they wrote down without getting lost in the details. This time only listen to the answers.

It sounds terrible, but it's true that more than half of the marriages end in divorce. We all know people in our family or friendship circle who have already gotten divorced or at least considered filing for divorce.

But why and when do people get divorced? Who initiates it and who suffers the most because of it? Will it be very painful? What does a 'good divorce' look like?

Today we are talking about this difficult decision.

The small groups should discuss 3-4 questions.

- How did the divorce affect you or your friend?
- What feelings do you have about your parents?
- How do divorced parents want to "please" their children?
- Do you think you were a reason why they got divorced? Why?
- Have you ever told your parents how their divorce affected you?
- Why is it important to be able to forgive your parents?
- What do you think of marriage? What is your take on it?
- How could you help a friend whose parents got divorced?

2. Facts about divorce

10

The divorce was a decision of your parents, it's not your fault!

It's absolutely normal to be angry, to be missing a parent or to feel that you lost someone. It is also absolutely normal to feel that it was your fault or that you would like the whole situation to be different. Divorce is not easy, it is painful for anyone involved in it.

Divorce affects even you!

It especially affects your ability to have healthy relationships as an adult. It will determine how you think about life, marriage, family and to what extent you will be capable of trusting others.

You cannot change your parents nor can you bring them together again.

You cannot change the circumstances, but you can change your attitude. For example, you can choose to sympathize with both of your parents and all of a sudden your attitude will change, too. They didn't get married only to divorce later. Both of them were hurt in the relationship.

Talk to an older friend, an adult whom you trust or to your teacher, school counselor or even a psychologist about your feelings. You must talk about this topic with a person who will listen to you and can even help you.

Feel free to share your feelings with your parents (if possible, both of them should be present). You can also write them a letter about how you feel with regard to their divorce. Start your letter with kind words.

Be a good listener and encourage people whose parents are going through a divorce. Try to be positive. They already feel bad; negative remarks will only make them feel worse.

3. Role play

20

Please photocopy the 25 "tasks" and cut them apart and place upside down on the table.

[This game was compiled to help children understand divorce and give them room to express their own feelings. The five types of tasks include 24 different questions. Play this game and note that every task has a point value depending on the difficulty of the particular task. Keep score.

Divide the students into two groups. Place the questions on a table (maybe the teacher's table) where students can pick a strip of paper without seeing the text on it. After a short discussion, the group gives their answer. The group selects who will do it.]

Drawing tasks:

1. Draw your family. — *10 points*
2. Draw what you felt when your parents told you that they were getting a divorce. — *20 points*
3. Draw three things that you like doing with your mom. — *30 points*
4. Tammie's mother always criticizes her father whom Tammie dearly loves. Draw what Tammie could do to express her feelings about this. — *40 points*
5. Ivy just learned that she is moving away with one of her parents. Draw what she might be feeling. — *50 points*.

Acting tasks:

1. Rob has issues with his stepmother because he feels that she treats her son better than him. Act out what you would do in his place. — *10 points*
2. Tammie is not getting along with her stepsister. She also feels that her mom and stepfather are not paying enough attention to her. Act out what you would do in her place. — *20 points*
3. Act out what happened when you first heard that your parents were divorcing. — *30 points*
4. Eve's stepfather would like her to call him daddy, but she doesn't want to do it. Act out what you would do in her place. — *40 points*
5. Lili's dad is dating a woman and this makes Lili upset. What should she tell her father? — *50 points*

Thinking tasks:

1. Why do you think people get divorced? — *10 points*
2. If there is anything you could change in your life, what would it be? — *20 points*
3. What do you think your parents felt like when they decided to get a divorce? — *30 points*
4. Joker: extra points — *40 points*
5. What does child custody mean? — *50 points*

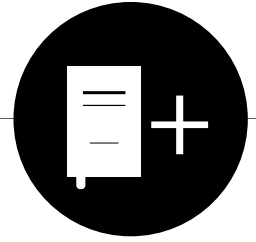
Speaking tasks:

1. Who are the 3 people in your family with whom you can talk about family issues? — *10 points*
2. One day you are having a difficult day in school because of your parents' divorce. A friend asks what's wrong. What will you tell him? — *20 points*
3. Your mother announces that you have to move away. In response, a) you start shouting and reject the idea; b) you tell her your feelings about moving; c) you keep your feelings to yourself. — *30 points*
4. Tell a story when you felt trapped between your two parents. — *40 points*
5. When your father keeps complaining about your mother's new boyfriend you say: a) "He is much nicer than you!" b) "I hate him!" c) "I don't think it's right to talk about this." — *50 points*

True or false exercises:

1. When parents leave each other it's because they don't love their children anymore. — *10 points*
2. Divorce means that two people don't live together in a marriage. — *20 points*
3. Sometimes when parents get divorced, one child stays with their dad and the other one with their mom. — *30 points*
4. Teachers don't want to hear about the family issues of students. This is why you are not to tell them what bothers you about your family. — *40 points*
5. Approximately half of all marriages end in divorce. — *50 points*

APPENDIX



VI.

Intimate Relationships

Preparing for Parenting

***NOTE:** We consider this reading important to include in the YTL material because it could be very helpful in your interactions with the parents of your students. It contains practical information and suggestions about parenting, which could easily be passed on during parent-teacher meetings. Even though it will be a while before they step into that role, this material can also be useful in helping teenagers understand and develop a healthy picture of what their future family life could include.*

It is often said that marriage and parenting are two responsibilities that people take on with little or no training. In fact, most of the training they do get is “on the job,” with lots of trial and error. It’s ironic that so often we seem to leave the most precious relationships in life to chance. We hope that somehow “love will conquer all,” that “the children will know that we love them anyway,” and “the things we’re doing are for their own good.”

How do you think a teenager feels when they think about the possibility of becoming a parent in the future? Can they see themselves in that role? Will they feel ready to take on that responsibility when the time comes? Maybe they’d rather not even think about it. Most teenagers have mixed opinions and feelings about the family and the whole idea of parenting.

Why should we even consider “parenting”?

It is the world’s *biggest job* with the least attention given to preparing for it. It’s also the *biggest privilege* with the greatest impact. Having and raising children who will one day hold responsible positions in the community is a great responsibility of immeasurable value. *But things that are valuable cost a lot!* Having the full responsibility for another human being can be and should be a fearful, humbling thing. For better or for worse, by intent or neglect, parents are ultimately the greatest influence a child will ever know! *The cost of not being ready is too great.* Bringing children into the world without being prepared for the responsibilities of parenting is cruel. Children who do not experience a healthy home and family life carry pain with them for the rest of their lives.

Child Psychologist, Dr. David Elkind writes: “We see more children who show symptoms of stress, headaches, stomach aches, low mood, and learning problems. As they get older, many of them feel they’ve missed an important part of their life. They feel abused. My concern is if they don’t feel cared about, then they can never care about anyone else, let alone themselves. We may be creating a large number of children who are emotional misfits.”¹

THE GOAL OF PARENTING

Although there are many things that could be said about the goal of parenting, the following summarizes the main priority. The goal of parenting is to raise mature, independent adults who can confidently face the joys and struggles of life on their own. Maturity is what the child needs. Independence is what the child will eventually want (and need) when the time comes. Any wise and loving parent will want their child to be able to face the challenges and demands of life with wisdom and confidence.

The goal of parenting is to raise mature, independent adults who can confidently face the joys and struggles of life on their own.

A mature, confident young adult can only develop in a home filled with loving leadership, nurturing relationships and wise instruction. This process does not happen overnight, rather it takes years of consistent input to complete.

Consider the process of taking a newborn infant all the way to adulthood. The process begins with a helpless, immature, human being inexperienced in life and ends with a mature, wise young adult who is confident, experienced and able to take care of himself and help others.

In order to help a child develop and mature, parents establish loving boundaries (limits, rules) for the child early on, which will eventually lead him to responsible behavior. The child willingly obeys, confident of his parents’ love for him. Eventually this leads to responsible behavior on his part, as well as self-confidence and autonomy.

Experts say more and more that many young adults are not prepared for adulthood. Many seem lost in a stormy sea of life-decisions: about their mission in life (career), their mate for life (their spouse, their life-long companion and helper), and the maintenance of life (possessions, family, work, finances, etc.). They seem to lack confidence and experience, therefore they are filled with fear, questions, timidity and confusion. This can lead to debilitating depression.

¹David Elkind, *The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast*, 3rd ed. (New York: Perseus, 2001).

It seems that a “law” was broken somewhere along the line that has left them in this constant state of immaturity. What is this law? We call it the “*Law of Parenting*.” This law states that: “*Parents must lovingly nurture their children, while they are children.*” Proper nurturing and instruction that

Parents must instruct, correct, train, discipline, care for and comfort them. They must help the child gain wisdom: to recognize right from wrong. They must help the child feel accepted, loved, valuable, important, and respected as a person while under their care.

leads to maturity can only take place while children are children. Parents must instruct, correct, train, discipline, care for and comfort them. They must help the child gain wisdom: to recognize right from wrong. They must help the child feel accepted, loved, valuable, important, and respected as a person while under their care. Breaking this law carries life-long consequences for the child, some of which are sustained immaturity, a poor self-image, difficulty in decision-making, emotional problems and often, moral degeneracy.

Recognizing the goal of “*enabling children to become mature*,” it is good to develop a plan that helps each child to become mature in his areas of

need. These needs usually relate to a character trait or skill necessary to live a healthy and satisfying life. Some potential areas to target for development are listed below.²

Character Traits: Faith, love, courage, endurance, poise, integrity, commitment (to spouse, family, friends, and their life-work), dependability and a good work ethic.

Decision Making Skills: In physical areas of life: rest/exercise/nutrition; in personal areas: finances/career/home life; in social areas of life: morality/dating/friendships.

Relationships/Social Skills: Forgiving others; resolving conflicts; good communication skills, listening and participating in conversation; making friendships; understanding their sexuality (respecting the purpose of sex in marriage and understanding the differences between men and women); handling enemies/rivals in a mature way; good manners; learning to stand up for what they believe when it is necessary (even if they are the only one); serving others; making healthy sacrifices when appropriate.

Home Life: Having a good understanding of what it takes to make a house a home by helping with things around the house, like taking out the trash, washing dishes, weeding the garden, (this will help them understand working together makes a job go quicker and better, both at home and in the community) and participating in planning family activities.

Ability to execute survival skills. (You will know others to add.) *Physical:* cook, clean, self-defense, swim, first aid, how to use public transportation. *Emotional:* handling fear, disappointment, discouragement and misunderstanding. *Spiritual:* a growing personal faith, prayer life, Bible knowledge/doctrine. *Financial:* living on a budget, managing money, taking proper care of belongings, able to evaluate the quality and necessity of new purchases.

Parenting is an overwhelming job. How can we accomplish the goal? Is it even possible? Are there any principles that can help us and serve as guidelines? We think there are. The following principles represent a practical approach to successful parenting and happy homes.

²H. Norman Wright, *The Power of a Parent's Words* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1991), 101-110.

The five principles of positive parenting³

Children do not respond to rules; they respond to relationships. The five principles are based upon this fact. Please remember—rules without relationships lead to rebellion. The essence of the following model is built upon the need to love and relate to your children as you teach them and help them grow up to maturity.

1. ACCEPTANCE—builds security and self-worth

Do you love your children because of what they do or because of who they are? Do you express this to them? Take your time answering. If you give the question a little thought, the answer may not be as simple as it looked at first. A lot depends on whether or not you yourself have experienced unconditional or conditional acceptance. When children sense true acceptance from their parents, they feel secure. They know they are valued and that they have worth that is not dependent on what they did or did not do, but only on the fact that they are who they are. They know they are loved for themselves alone.

Unconditional acceptance is based on who the child is—a human being made in God’s image, with intrinsic value assigned by his Creator. Children parented with unconditional acceptance stand a much better chance of having positive self-worth. They are much more likely to feel secure in their relationship with their parents and to respond to loving authority. Unconditional acceptance is all-important because it develops a feeling of security in the child that allows him to be vulnerable and transparent with his parents, which leads to greater trust between parents and child.

Conditional acceptance on the other hand, is destructive. It focuses on what the child does. If the child obeys, achieves, or performs well, he is encouraged, accepted, maybe even rewarded. But if his performance is not up to parental standards, he is reprimanded, yelled at, even punished. This causes feelings of insecurity and rejection, resulting in a negative self-esteem. In this kind of environment, willingness to be vulnerable and transparent fades along with trust between parent and child.

There is nothing more important for a parent to learn and practice than unconditional acceptance. The insecure child will not be transparent. That is, he will not come home from school to share with you what’s been happening, what his friends have been doing and saying. If a child feels unaccepted and insecure, he lives in fear—the fear that “I’ll be rejected so I’d better keep my mouth shut.” Acceptance must come first in building your relationship with your children. The more you can communicate unconditional acceptance to your children, the more prone they will be to be open and share with you what’s happening in their lives.

A personal story of acceptance⁴

One night when I was 17, I got into trouble with the police. I was caught and arrested for possession of marijuana. My father had to come to the jail to pay the fine and take me home. As we were driving home, he asked if I had smoked marijuana for a long time and whose “stuff” we got caught with that night. Although I had smoked dope for two and a half years and the dope we were caught with was mine, I chose to lie.

³This section is based on information from Josh McDowell and Dick Day, *How to Be a Hero to Your Kids* (New York: W Publishing, 1993).

⁴The personal story of David M. Robinson, co-founder of Yout at the Threshold of Life.

"It was Mike's and Jim's marijuana. I'm sorry, dad. It was stupid. I'll never do it again. I've only done it twice."

He went on to ask me the very same questions two more times while we drove home. He asked me the third time, "Was this your marijuana?" Then he added with tears in his eyes, "David, I sense you are lying. And I think I know why. You made a mistake tonight. But if you think this will keep me from loving you you're wrong. Nothing you could do could ever make me stop loving you. I just want to know the truth. Now, tell me the truth, was this your marijuana you got caught with tonight."

What do you think I did? I not only told the truth of that night's happenings, but also confessed all the lies I'd been hiding for years! His unconditional love set me free. My performance was being separated from my person. And as a result, my person was secure enough to be truthful with unprecedented transparency. That night changed my life and my relationship with my parents took on new depth!

2. APPRECIATION—the key to feeling significant

Acceptance communicates that we matter. Appreciation shows that the child's contribution matters. Appreciation relates to significance—feeling that one's accomplishments make a difference to someone. Appreciation and acceptance are the two main building blocks that provide the LOVE half of the parenting equation. We will get to the LIMITATIONS side a little later in this section.

If acceptance is the foundation of a good relationship with your child, appreciation is the cornerstone. Accepting your child builds his or her self-worth and sense of security. Appreciation adds a sense of significance, the idea that, *"Hey, I'm important! Mother and Father like to have me around—they're proud of me!"* To practice appreciation, parents need to become what author Mamie McCullough calls a "good finder." Instead of approaching the parenting task with the goal of correcting, disciplining, and keeping children within the limits we've set for them, the emphasis should be placed on looking first for where and when children can be sincerely praised, complimented and encouraged.

That doesn't mean parents abandon discipline or correction when it's needed. Instead they let the child know that they really notice and approve of what he or she does right. This paves the way for positive discipline; when it comes time to correct mistakes or misbehavior it can be done in an encouraging climate. A parent won't feel like, *"All I ever notice is what my children are doing wrong – I'm always criticizing them for something."*

Having this attitude is very critical because it is evident in our actions. A good example of the attitude most of us have as parents follows: A father is busily working at home on paper work when his wife comes in and says, *"Honey, Joe just came home with all A's (highest grade he could get) on his report card."* *"That's great,"* he'd probably reply. *"I'm right in the middle of something. I'll talk to him about it later."*

At dinner that night he might remember to talk to him about it, and then, again, he might not. The point is, when Joe does something worthy of praise, the dad (in this case) didn't take the immediate opportunity to express his pride and appreciation.

But suppose the mom had walked in and said, *"Honey, Joe just hit Kathy for going into his room."* *"He did what!? Send him here right now. I want to talk to him!"*

News that his son had struck his little sister got a totally different reaction. Suddenly, all else is not important. The matter couldn't wait until dinner. It had to be dealt with now, because he had to straighten out his son and be sure he was disciplined properly.

What parents sometimes don't realize is that they are teaching their children something that they don't want to communicate at all: *"The fastest way to get mom's or dad's attention is to do something wrong."*

The One-Minute Manager written by Kenneth Blanchard and Spencer Johnson is a brief, fast-moving allegory that quickly and concisely spells out how a manager in any typical company or corporation can help his people set proper goals and then guide them in reaching those goals by giving frequent praise as well as effective reprimands. According to Blanchard and Johnson, the One-Minute Manager moves among his people, trying to *"catch them doing something right."* And when he does, he quickly shows them appreciation and encouragement for their efforts.

This is a good point for parenting. Instead of seeing the parenting job as primarily a matter of catching children doing something wrong and making sure they are corrected, they must change their perspective and: *"Try to catch their children doing something right."* It's funny how one little phrase can bring a concept or principle to life. It would be a good practice for parents to periodically ask themselves how many things their children have done right recently and then try to mentally list fifteen or twenty things – these are things for which the children could receive honest praise.

Some parents have the idea that children are supposed to do certain things, so there is no point in praising them for those things (taking out the trash, going to the store for bread and milk, watching their little sister or brother). But then again, why not?

How do you feel when you are praised for doing your job? Everyone would love to hear the boss say, *"You handled that situation really well."* Everyone would love to have the family say, *"That was a great meal; you couldn't have fixed anything better tasting!"*

Give children the freedom to achieve. Encourage them in their efforts, even though their efforts are imperfect. They have time to improve their skills; let's not take away their desire to persevere by depriving them of the encouragement they need to go on with courage and confidence.

Admittedly, there is a fine line here; a balance we must find for each child, of how much to encourage him and how much to correct him. Too much of either one would not be good for the child. The best way to walk that line is to start with acceptance, then move to appreciation. Children need to feel secure, loved and full of self-worth, as well as to know they have the freedom to fail; then they are much more likely to relax and achieve their full potential. Whether they're working for grades in school, participating in athletics, or engaging in any other endeavor, they will be doing it out of confidence, not a desperate effort to perform in order to be approved by their parents.

It would be good for parents to regularly reflect on the following statement:

"I appreciate my child's effort more than my child's accomplishment, and I appreciate my child's worth as a human being, even more than my child's effort."

It is possible that appreciating the child's effort might become a "condition" that would push the child toward living on a "performance basis," i.e., that the child has to do something to be accepted. The best safeguard against this happening is to primarily focus on accepting the child unconditionally and, secondly, center on appreciating their efforts. No matter how long the child has done this, a

parent will never be a “natural” or an “expert.” The child will always have to work at being an accepting, appreciative parent.

3. AFFECTION—without it children will not thrive

If acceptance and appreciation are to come to full bloom, children must receive ample amounts of affection from their parents. Affection is like water to a plant, oil to an engine and food to the hungry.

Affection says, *“You are lovable.”*

It seems unnecessary to remind parents to be affectionate toward their children. Unfortunately, many children do grow up without it, and the repercussions can be felt all around us. Often, teenagers who become involved in premarital sex are looking for the love they never got when they were small.

Children can’t get too much affection. They need to hear it and feel it every day. A parent should show physical affection daily to their children through plenty of hugs, kisses, and pats. They should express their affection toward their children verbally by telling them they love them. These words cannot be said to a child too many times.

It’s true that as children get a little older and move into the upper elementary grades and junior high, they may start to act as if they don’t need or want a lot of affection. But the truth is they need just as much or even more affection than when they were younger; it may just need to be expressed a little differently. Unfortunately, there is a tendency by parents to show less affection as a child grows older. Studies clearly suggest that the older children get, the less their parents communicate verbal and physical affection to them. The older the child is the less the parents communicate their love on an everyday basis.

Why is this important? It is terribly ironic that when children reach adolescence and are grappling with personal identity and establishing a healthy self-esteem, they are quite likely to be receiving very little parental affection.

It is not enough for a parent to simply say, *“The children know I love them. I don’t have to be telling them and showing them all the time.”* You do have to be telling and showing them all the time. Showing affection to children is what gives them a sense of lovability, and feeling lovable gives them the confidence they need to establish healthy relationships with others outside the family. Many teenagers, especially teenage girls, have gotten into trouble sexually because they were trying to prove that they were lovable.

A mother came to Josh McDowell⁵, the speaker during a parent conference, and showed him a picture of her beautiful fifteen-year-old daughter, and poured out her story:

This year my daughter has had sex with seventeen men. A month ago she had an abortion and two weeks ago she attempted suicide. This morning she was leaving for school and I asked her, “Honey, why do you do it? Why are you doing this to yourself? Do you have such a sex drive or something that you can’t control it? What is it?”

My daughter answered, “Mom, I don’t even think I have a sex drive. I don’t even like sex.”

“Well, why are you doing it then?”

“At least when each guy gets through he tells me he loves me.”

⁵Josh McDowell and Dick Day, *Why Wait? What You Need to Know about the Teen Sexuality Crisis* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1994).

Psychologists say that it is during the teenage years that one secures his identity. Adolescents need to experience affection in order to establish their personal identity and self-worth. Lacking solid footing during this stage of development results in many teenagers wandering into various kinds of sexual mistakes in their search for stability. One's capacity for intimacy is rooted in their identity. Intimacy involves developing the capacity to invite another person or persons inside our very core; to be able to reveal ourselves completely with all our weaknesses, fears, and doubts. But, if we don't know who we are (identity) or are uncomfortable with what we know about ourselves, it is virtually impossible to achieve true intimacy with anyone else. Research says that if parents let their children make discoveries and figure out their own way, they will be able to find their true identity. However, if the parents put pressure on their children to adhere to their value system and mindset, it will cause an identity crisis for many years.

4. AVAILABILITY—love is spelled: T-I-M-E

Children in much of the world today rarely experience interaction with parents or extended family members. In the past, it was different. Relatives lived close to one another, families worked together in the same business, mother and father did not both have to work to be able to make enough money to keep the family fed and clothed. Today, in a typical family, both parents dash out the door to work each morning and come dragging back home each night. Once they get home, they have to prepare for the next day.

The result is that children have only about fifteen minutes of interaction with parents each day. According to some experts, twelve of those minutes are spent criticizing and instructing the children. That leaves three minutes for fun, laughing together, or enjoying quality moments when real communication occurs.

It's amazing how the motto, "*Give us a child until he is seven and he will be shaped for life*," dominates the thinking of society. There is good reason for this motto, for the first seven years of life are in many ways the most formative years of a person's life. This is why it is important to show acceptance, build trust and autonomy into a child while they are very young.

But recent research tells us that there is another period of formative years for every person and that is adolescence, which begins around the age of eleven or twelve. Most parents don't know this; they have to battle the popular myth: "*The formative years are past*." As a child moves into the teenage years, the myth says that the child doesn't need their parents as much, because the child is developing their own values and becoming independent. Again, there is truth to this, but it's not the whole truth. Dr. James Dobson, psychologist and author of the best-selling book, *Preparing for Adolescence*, once said, "*According to my research, when children reach puberty, they need their parents—especially their fathers—just as much, if not more, than they ever did.*"⁶

It is important for parents to make time in their busy schedules for their teenagers. Otherwise, time will pass and teens will grow up and it will be too late. The time a parent has to influence their child is only the present. They do not have the past or the future. We must carefully evaluate our priorities in life and choose to live our lives accordingly. We can't afford to squander the time allotted to us to nurture and guide our adolescents into adulthood. All the time we invest in this process will be worth it many times over when we see our children standing on their own two feet as strong, confident and well-balanced adults. Most teens seek someone with a listening and interested ear; they want to be

⁶James Dobson, *Preparing for Adolescence: How to Survive the Coming Years of Change* (Colorado Springs: Gospel Light, 2005).

able to think out loud with someone about the things that worry or concern them. They want to make sense out of the confusing details of growing up. We can be that person, all we need to give is time.

5. ACCOUNTABILITY and loving AUTHORITY give limits—develop self-discipline, self-control and decision-making ability

So far we have described what goes into a loving relationship: acceptance, appreciation, affection, and availability. As you establish that loving relationship, limits must come into play. While it is true that limits without love can cause rebellion, it is equally true that all love and no limits can cause just as many problems, and in some cases, even more. The limits “half” of parenting includes two principles. The first is **accountability**, which simply means “*willing and able to be called to account, to explain or answer for one’s actions in a responsible way.*” Accountability helps a child develop self-discipline and self-control. Accountability is closely tied to **authority**, which is the second “half” of limits.

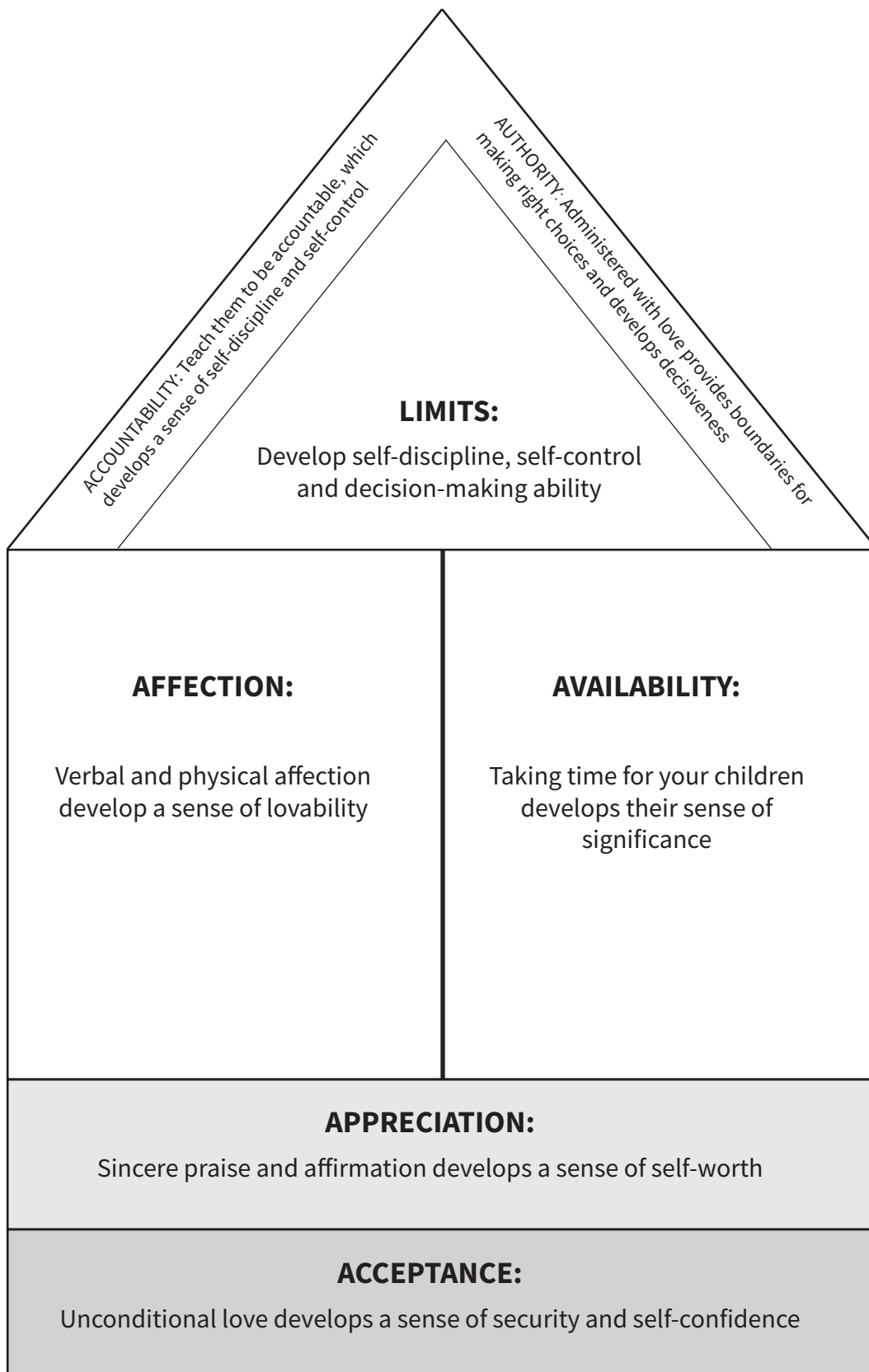
Accountability and authority establish the parameters within which children learn the moral attributes of God, and the concepts of right and wrong. Authority helps a child learn to make choices within certain boundaries. Concepts like accountability and responsibility are not very popular, especially with children. After all, being accountable can cause a person to feel limited. It’s easier to do as you please and not have to answer to anyone. But that’s not how life works. Without accountability, society would be in shambles. Without accountability, homes can degenerate into chaos.

Parents often complain that children are “irresponsible.” One father with three children in elementary school said: *“I really like what you say about being accepting, loving, and available, and all the rest, but somewhere along the way, children have to learn the realities of life. They have to learn to obey and be responsible. What I’d like to know is how to teach my children responsibility. If I didn’t reprimand them, they’d never clean their rooms, take out the garbage, or do any of the simple little chores I assign them.”* As a parent it is easy to sympathize with this father because it seems that this really is the only way we can get children to do what we would like them to do. His children, along with every other child in the world, probably don’t really care about becoming responsible or accountable for their actions.

Accountability is closely associated with two concepts—submission and obedience. If we are accountable to someone, we humble ourselves enough to willingly submit to (or allow) another person to hold us to our word about a particular behavior or attitude and we choose to obey or heed their advice. Becoming accountable and responsible is a crucial part of growing up and becoming a mature, balanced human being. To be accountable to someone means allowing that person to help us live up to the standard we or others have set for us. The reason we want to be accountable in certain areas is that we do not want to stray out of the boundaries we have decided are important. Without this ability we won’t be able to cooperate well together in our adult life in the workplace.

For example, staying faithful to our spouse, not disciplining our children in anger and frustration, not eating too much, limiting our smoking, etc.—keeping ourselves to these limits helps us to show respect, love and care to those around us. Learning to be accountable and responsible is one important way we let go of childish habits and become mature men and women. Only secure people who feel significant and have experienced acceptance and appreciation are capable of being accountable for their actions. They will not feel attacked in their identity when they find themselves in a submissive role. If we accept and appreciate our children, they can learn to be accountable. In fact, they will want to be accountable for their behavior!

The Five Principles of Positive Parenting

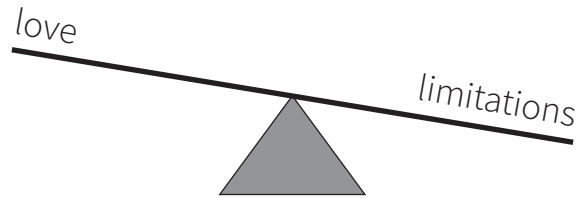


Four parenting styles

Most homes are characterized by one of the following four parenting styles:

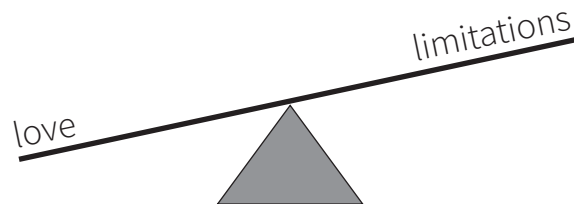
1. Autocratic:

"You'll do it my way, or else!" Strong control, but little support.



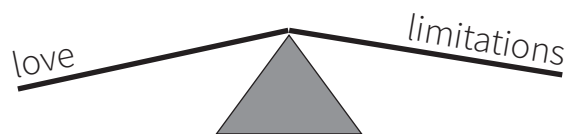
2. Permissive:

"You can do anything you want." Strong support, but little control.



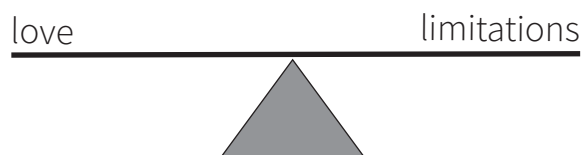
3. Neglectful:

"I really don't care what you do." It could also be called "Indifferent" / Little or no control; little or no support; the child feels like a non-entity.



4. Relational:

"I'm listening ... I care about you ... I want to understand ... This time we'll do it this way because...."
With accountability and loving authority, the right balance of control and support.



The four phases of parenting⁷

Parenthood automatically grants parents several roles. One of the most important is the role of teacher-trainer. In this role the parent passes through three building block phases with their children. Afterwards, the fourth phase, which is almost entirely a relational role, takes over. The success of each phase is dependent on the success of the preceding phase. As we have already discussed, parenting involves training and discipline. This involves rules. But, don't forget that rules without relationship lead to rebellion.

Children do not respond to rules; they respond to relationships. It's true that we can get our children to "behave" by enforcing the rules. We can control our children to a certain point by imposing regulations for everything, but that doesn't necessarily mean we will get their loving and obedient response. What we do get is their reaction, which may look like obedience on the surface, but beneath the surface there is fear, frustration and anger.

Unless we establish a loving, accepting relationship with our child, we can almost count on trouble when the child gets older. In fact, the Bible warns parents not to provoke or exasperate their children (see Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:32). These verses point out that rules without relationship will almost always exasperate or provoke a child into negative behavior.

Phase one: discipline

This phase covers the periods of birth to five years of age. In this phase a parent needs to establish boundaries. These boundaries should yield to more freedom as responsible behavior is demonstrated. The child should initially not be granted unlimited freedoms as this will confuse them and cause them to feel insecure. Once the child knows their limits, they will feel loved and secure within their boundaries and will be ready to be effectively trained. If the child doesn't get loving discipline in their "small world," then eventually the "big world," will teach them in a not so loving way.

Phase two: training

The second phase is the training phase, which extends from age six to twelve. The purpose of this phase is to help the child gain confidence in life through "practical application." With a loving parent at their side and a secure home environment, the child experiments with life in all its variety. The parent's job is to give guidance, make corrections, give explanations and advice and show them what to do and how to do it. In a sense, the child is like an athlete with their trainer (the parent) at their side during a practice session. They are not yet in the real "game" of life—they are still on the practice field, learning about the "game" and applying the knowledge they do have—all in a safe and loving environment.

Phase three: coaching

From ages 13-22, children are increasingly involved in the real "game" of life. This causes the parent's job to change. Children at this stage increasingly act on their own initiative, opinions and ideas. This means parents must allow them the necessary independence to make decisions for themselves. The parent still coaches them (wisely counsels, provides balance and perspective, answers questions, stays involved), but can no longer stop the "game" and show them how everything is done. Their children now make their own decisions, right or wrong, and face the consequences.

⁷This section is based on information from Gary and Anne Marie Ezzo, *Preparation for Parenting* (Burlington, IA: Growing Families International, 2002).

Phase four: friendship and mentor

In this final phase of parenting when children are over 22 years old, the relationship between parent and child changes to friendship. Although the parent-child relationship never ceases, it eventually changes in form and function and both parent and child enter into this new season of life. Children at this stage begin to seek out their parents' advice, wisdom, and experience to help them in solving the situations they face in life. In this advisory role, parents provide stability, balance, guidance, comfort and a listening ear from a greater distance and with less time—intensity. Of course, parents will continue to be available to help their children whenever the need arises. However, the ultimate goal of parenting is to enable children to grow to maturity and be able to live confident and satisfying adult lives independently from them.

Parenting—a great privilege and a great challenge. All things that have a great price also have great value. The family is one of the most important things in the world; it is the foundation stone of society. It is the place where human beings are nurtured into adulthood. It is a place of love and acceptance; a place of rest and healing. It is a school where a child learns “**life**”—its language, its customs, its values and difficulties.

STUDENT NOTES



Family Atmosphere Survey

What we have experienced in our families most influences our answers to these questions. Think of your parents, your home life and answer accordingly. On a scale of 0 to 10 (0 = never evident and 10 = always evident) rate the presence of the traits of a healthy family in your family.

1. The climate of our home is positive.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Each member of the family is valued and accepted for who they are.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. Members of the family care for one another; they demonstrate and verbalize their caring and affirmation.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. The family enjoys being together.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. Children are raised in such a way that:

- they can mature and become individuals in their own right. They have a strong sense of identity and a healthy self-image.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

- they are learning to make decisions for themselves.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

- they have an ethical system for life to guide them—they know right from wrong.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

- they are experiencing more independence from their parents in the mid-teen years.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

- they feel ready and can confidently face life's future challenges.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. Family members can share their hopes, dreams, fears and concerns with one another and still be accepted.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Add up your score!

EVALUATION

- 0-30 Your family situation has brought you a variety of negative feelings. They can range from fear, depression, anger and resentment. You must learn the purpose of parenting from other models by reading the previous chapter titled "Preparing for Parenting." It is designed to address your fears and answer some, not all, of your questions regarding the purpose of the family and the roles of parenthood.
- 31-50 You have similar needs to those mentioned above, but may not feel them as intensely.
- 51-70 You have many questions and insecurities regarding the family and your future role as a parent.
- 71-90 You are well-prepared for this role. All you need is time to get older, a little more experience, a good job and a marriage partner.
- 91-100 You can skip class today!

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