

A close-up portrait of a man with short brown hair and blue eyes, wearing a dark suit jacket. He is resting his chin on his right hand, which has a gold ring on the ring finger. The background is dark and out of focus.

Mort Fertel

The Complete
**MARRIAGE
FITNESS**

Workbook & Personal Journal

www.MortFertel.com

BEGIN HERE

HOW TO USE YOUR MARRIAGE FITNESS WORKBOOK

Your Marriage Fitness program is a comprehensive interactive multi-sensory relationship-changing self-guided program that uses written explanations, interactive exercises, “homework” assignments, reading assignments, relationship habits, journal entries, tele-seminars, a Q&A teleconference, and audio listening experiences to help you transform your marriage.

How fast should I go?

Marriage Fitness is a go-at-your-own-pace program. You should proceed through the program at whatever pace is comfortable for you. You can go as fast or as slow as you wish. You decide the pace depending on your circumstances. You can complete the program in 10 days or 10 weeks. You may want to invest more time into certain sections while cruising through others.

Do I need my spouse to do the Marriage Fitness program?

You can do the Marriage Fitness program with or without your spouse. If your spouse is willing to participate, then you should proceed together (Duo Track). If your spouse is unavailable or uncooperative, then follow the instructions labeled “Lone Ranger Track.” You’ll learn more about this matter while listening to some of the audio presentations and teleconferences.

Can I schedule 1-on-1 private sessions too?

I’m available for private sessions. You can schedule phone sessions in 1-hour increments or a full-day intensive “house call.” For more details and fees about private sessions go to www.MortFertel.com/marriage-coaching. To make an appointment, call 410.764.1552 or email CustomerService@MarriageMax.com.

Many people want additional 1-on-1 private sessions but aren't financially able to utilize my services. So I hand-picked the cream of the crop nationally in the marriage-help field to be available to you at more affordable fees. For more information about these Marriage Fitness experts, go to www.MortFertel.com/extra-1-on-1.

What do I do when I have a question?

If you have a question about your marital situation, feel free to schedule a private session with me. I’ll be happy to help you.

If your question is administrative, technical, or logistical, please contact my assistant Rebecca. Her email is CustomerService@MarriageMax.com. Her job is to help you with customer service related issues. She’s the resident expert when it comes to computers, technology, emails, billing history, links, or anything else that doesn’t relate to your marriage. So, if your question is administrative in nature, PLEASE contact Rebecca.

Can I email you?

I do not correspond via email.

A note about the names used in this workbook

In Marriage Fitness materials, you will read about real-life marital situations. All the names have been changed to protect the privacy of the people involved.

Can I make copies from this workbook?

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I'm ready. What's next?

Turn the page and begin!

Phase 1

ANSWERS TO YOUR PRESSING QUESTIONS

In my experience working with people trying to renew their marriage, there are 3 pressing questions that stand out. Answers to these questions will not only provide you relief, but also empower you with principles that will help you get the most from your Marriage Fitness program. Let's begin by exploring answers to these questions.

Question 1: How do I know if I married the right person?

During one of my live seminars, a woman asked me a common question. She said, "How do I know if I married the right person?"

I noticed that there was a large muscular man sitting next to her so I said, "It depends. Is that your husband?"

In all seriousness, how do you know?

Here's the answer.

Every relationship has a cycle. In the beginning, you fell in love with your spouse. You anticipated their call, wanted their touch, and liked their idiosyncrasies.

Falling in love with your spouse wasn't hard. In fact, it was a completely natural and spontaneous experience. You didn't have to *do* anything. That's why it's called "falling" in love...because it's happening *to you*.

People in love sometimes say, "I was swept off my feet." Think about the imagery of that expression. It implies that you were just standing there; doing nothing, and then something came along and happened *to you*.

Falling in love is easy. It's a passive and spontaneous experience.

But after a few years of marriage, the euphoria of love fades. It's the *natural* cycle of *every* relationship. Slowly but surely, phone calls become a bother (if they come at all), touch is not always welcome (when it happens), and your spouse's idiosyncrasies, instead of being cute, drive you nuts.

The symptoms of this stage vary with every relationship, but if you think about your marriage, you will notice a dramatic difference between the initial stage when you were in love and a much duller or even angry subsequent stage.

At this point, you and/or your spouse might start asking, "Did I marry the right person?" And as you and your spouse reflect on the euphoria of the love you once had, you may begin to desire that experience with someone else. This is when marriages break down. People blame their spouse for their unhappiness and look outside their marriage for fulfillment.

Extramarital fulfillment comes in all shapes and sizes. Infidelity is the most obvious. But sometimes people turn to work, church, a hobby, a computer game, pornography, a friendship, excessive TV, or abusive substances.

But the answer to this dilemma does *not* lie outside your marriage. It lies within it.

I'm not saying that you couldn't fall in love with someone else. You could. And *temporarily* you'd feel better. But you'd be in the same situation a few years later. Because (listen carefully) *the key to succeeding in marriage is not finding the right person; it's learning to love the person you found.*

Sustaining love is not a passive or spontaneous experience. It'll *never* just happen to you. You can't "find" lasting love. You have to "make" it day in and day out.

That's why we have the expression "the labor of love." Because it takes time, effort, and energy. And most importantly, it takes wisdom. You have to know *what to do* to make your marriage work.

How do you know if you married the right person? The answer depends *not* on who you chose to marry years ago, but on how *you* choose to act today. If you live a lifestyle that manifests love between you, then your spouse will be just right. If you don't, then your spouse, and any spouse, will have been the wrong choice.

Exercise 1.1
Why did you fall in love with your spouse?

List 5 reasons why you fell in love with your spouse.

I fell in love with (print your spouse's name)_____ because:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Spouse 2

I fell in love with (print your spouse's name)_____ because:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Exercise 1.2
Did you get a sub?

When love fades from our marriage, we often fill that void in our life with other people, activities, or things. List in the space provided below the things, interests, hobbies, substances, habits, or people you turned to in order to fill the void created when your marriage deteriorated. Remember, this is for your benefit, so be honest with yourself.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Spouse 2

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

<p>Exercise 1.3</p> <p>The History of Your Love Life</p>

How many times have you fallen in love in your life? In the space provided below, list the people you've fallen in love with and how long your love lasted (not how long the relationship lasted, but how long the *love* lasted).

<u>People You Fell in Love with</u>	<u>How Long Your <i>Love</i> Lasted</u>
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____
7. _____	_____
8. _____	_____

Spouse 2

1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____
7. _____	_____
8. _____	_____

Exercise 1.4
Analyzing Your Love Life

Review again your responses from exercise 1.3 above. Think deeply about the history of your love life. When did your love fade in each case? Why did it fade in each case? Do you see any patterns either in terms of timing or dynamics? Record your conclusions below.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

Spouse 2

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

Question 2: How do I get my spouse to change?

In your quest to fix your marriage, you may encounter resistance...from your spouse!

Your spouse may dwell on the 101 reasons why “this just won't work for us” and blame you for every one.

Or, your spouse may have emotionally “checked-out” of the marriage and not care about your efforts to improve the situation or be willing to extend any effort of their own. Your spouse may even be involved already with someone else.

This is, by far, one of the most common questions people ask me: “How do I get my spouse to change?”

There's a deep-seated belief in our culture that people resist change, no matter what. But is this true? Do people really want things to remain status quo? Do we really not want things to change? If you look closely at human nature, it's not change itself we resist; it's change that's *imposed upon us*.

Think about it. We have no problem with change that *we initiate*. But when we feel forced or manipulated to change, then we resist with all our might.

Your spouse may not be willing to change for the sake of your marriage right now, but that's not because your spouse doesn't want a great marriage. Everyone wants a great marriage. It's because if they're going to change, they want the change to be *their idea!*

I promise you this: Your spouse will change when they decide to change and not one second before. And the more you push, urge, nudge, ask, bribe, scream, or beg, the *less likely* they are to change. That doesn't just mean that your efforts to get your spouse to change won't work; it means they are *counterproductive*.

As long as it's your idea for your spouse to change, then it can't be their idea. In other words, as long as you occupy the position of decision-maker, you're in the way of them taking that position and you're interfering with the result you want.

If you want your spouse to change, you have to *get out of their way!* You have to relinquish the position that you want them to take. As long as you're vying for your spouse to change, your spouse will take the alternative stance.

This is analogous to walking through a door that opens toward you. The harder the push, the tighter it closes. If you want the door to open, you have to step back.

I know this is hard to do because you want to be proactive. You feel compelled to *do something* to try to get the results you want. But the most effective thing you can “do” in this case is nothing. You have to be patient, wait, and let it come from them.

It is possible that someone could inspire your spouse to change, but the person *least likely* to be the inspiration is you. It's sad but true. A complete stranger is more likely to get through to your spouse than you are. A chance experience or encounter is more likely to shake up your spouse than anything you could do. It's quite possible that you have just the right message to share with your spouse to get them to change, but you're the wrong messenger.

Mary Ellen scheduled private phone sessions with me. She knew she had to make changes and came to our sessions with a genuine interest to improve her marriage. She wanted Tom (her husband) to be part of the process, but he wasn't willing to join her. She had been asking him to go with her to counseling for over a year. But Tom consistently refused.

I talked with Mary Ellen twice and convinced her to back-off Tom for a while. I counseled her to make changes that created a positive energy in their relationship. When the time was right, I suggested that Mary Ellen ask Tom if he would be willing to speak with me for 10 minutes. Mary Ellen's timing was good. Tom agreed.

Within the first few minutes of my conversation with Tom, he agreed to join Mary Ellen in our sessions.

Why were we able to get Tom to agree to something in a few minutes that Mary Ellen alone couldn't get him to do in over a year? There were 3 important factors:

1. For the first time in over a year, Mary Ellen backed-off far enough so that Tom had the opportunity to choose joint sessions without that choice feeling like a concession to his wife.
2. Mary Ellen implemented some positive relationship habits that began to change their marital environment.
3. The “push” came from someone other than his wife.

I can't tell you how many times a spouse will say to me that their husband/wife changed for a few days, but then returned to their old ways. That's because they never really decided to change. They were pressured. They were manipulated. And so it didn't stick.

If you tell your spouse what to do; it's a challenge. If they decide to do it; it's a great idea. *You have to let it come from them.* That's the only way it'll make a lasting difference in your marriage.

In the words of Marilyn Ferguson, “Each of us guards a gate of change that can only be unlocked from the inside. We cannot open the gate of another, either by argument or by emotional appeal.”

Now you're probably thinking, “Makes sense, but isn't there anything I can do to encourage my spouse's choice?” Yes there is! *You can be an inspiring example* and let your spouse see how the choices *you're* making impacts how *you* feel about yourself and your marriage.

Resist the urge to believe that your marriage won't change until your spouse “gets with the program.” The love *you* feel is much more a result of what *you do* for your marriage than what your spouse does for it.

We tend to think that the love in our marriage is in our spouse's hands. But it's not. Love is a verb. And if we do it...if we love...then we feel love. The choice is ours.

Consider the love you feel for your children. Is it because of everything they do for you? Of course not. The love you feel for your children is a result of what *you do for them.* The love you feel in your marriage is a result of what *you do* too.

Furthermore, there's no better way to inspire your spouse to make the choice to change than to make that choice yourself. Your actions are more inspiring than your words. If your spouse sees you changing, then they're more likely to consider changing too.

Very often one spouse schedules private sessions with me and ask if it makes sense for them to be coached alone. The answer is absolutely yes! One spouse can make more than a 50% difference in a marriage. And that difference is often exactly what will get the other spouse to begin to engage the marriage renewal process.

It's easy to confess your spouse's sins. And you're probably correct about what your spouse needs to change. But it does no good to be right. And it's a complete waste of time and energy to focus on your spouse's problems. There's nothing you can do about it. The only relevant question is: What's *your* fixing?

You had a role in the deterioration of your marriage. I have never seen a marital situation that is caused by one spouse. There's always dual responsibility. What can *you* do to improve the situation?

Reflect on your past relationships. Do you see a pattern? Look at your parent's marriage. Are you recreating the model you saw when you were a child? Have you explored with a professional the childhood roots of your relationship habits and how they contributed to your marital circumstances?

Even if your spouse had an affair, you're partly responsible. That doesn't mean that it's your fault and it doesn't excuse your spouse's inappropriate behavior, but the question still remains: What was your spouse seeking outside your marriage that was not available within it?

The bottom line—as Mahatma Gandhi said, "You must be the change you wish to see."

It's *you* changing that has the greatest impact on *your experience* of your marriage and it's *you* changing that is the single most important thing you can do to motivate your spouse to change.

Often we change jobs, friends, and spouses instead of ourselves.
- Akbarali H. Hetha

Let everyone sweep in front of his own door, and the whole world will be clean.
- Goethe

Exercise 1.5
Take the Pressure Off!

List the ways you're pressuring your spouse to change. Include your actions, speech, and body language. If it's appropriate and if it won't be counterproductive, ask your spouse if you're pressuring them in ways not on your list. If so, add those behaviors to your list. Review your list regularly until you're conscious of your behaviors and commit to refrain from them in the future.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

Spouse 2

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

Exercise 1.6
What's Your Fixing?

Let me concede to you up front that your spouse has made mistakes and needs to make changes. Okay done! Now let's move on to what's relevant for *you*. What's *your* fixing? What changes do *you* need to make? What could *you* do to improve your marriage? Make a list below and assign one immediate action-item for each thing you list.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

Spouse 2

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

Question 3: How do I know when it's time to call it quits?

Another question I'm frequently asked is, "How do you know when it's time to quit?"

In terms of when it's time to say good-bye to your spouse, here's what I recommend: Try for one year.

I mean *really* try. You always have the option to call it quits. You always have that option. But once you sever that tie, it's over. No more chances. Your life will never be the same. Do you have kids? If you do, their life will never be the same.

If you end your marriage, you don't want to have a shred of doubt. You don't ever want to look back and wonder if things could have been different. You don't want to ask yourself, "What if this...and what if that...what if I tried this...what if I did that?"

If you have to end your marriage, you want to know deep in your heart that you did everything you could to make it work.

If you have to end it, you want to be able to move on with your life and into another relationship with a clear head. You want to come to a place of healthy "completion." This is crucial! And to accomplish this, it takes at least one year. I know it probably seems like a long time, but it's an investment in the rest of your life.

Here's the key point. It's a good investment for the rest of your life *whether your marriage succeeds or not*. Obviously, it's a good investment if you turn your marriage around. But even if you don't, it will *not* have been a wasted year. It will have been the most important thing you could have done with that year because of how your effort will impact the rest of your life and your next relationship.

I have seen too many cases of spouses ending their marriage prematurely. They don't reach "completion" in their relationship or learn what *really* went wrong. As a result, they find themselves in the same situation a few years later with someone else.

You helped create your marital circumstances. There's a reason you chose your spouse. There may be something about the way you interact with partners you select that needs fixing. Whether it's for the benefit of this relationship or your next one, you need to take responsibility for your role in the deterioration of your marriage and fix what may be broken about you.

The work I do with a person in private sessions sometimes turns out to be more beneficial for them in their next relationship than in their current one.

I remember when someone who registered for the Lone Ranger Track of the Marriage Fitness Tele-Boot Camp™ got divorced in the middle of the program. This man asked me if he should continue with the final 3 weeks of the program. I said, "Absolutely."

He responded, "Why? What's the point? My marriage is over."

"You're not doing it for this marriage," I explained. "You're doing it for the benefit of your next one."

Now don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that your intention while you're working on your marriage should be for the benefit of your life after your marriage. Your intention needs to be to restore your *current* relationship. But if you fail, your effort will *not* have been for naught.

Bottom line is this. If you're asking, "When is it time to call it quits?" The answer is: one year after you think you're done. If after one year of trying everything in your power to make your marriage work you're still miserable, then you should consider moving on. Until then, hang in there, don't give up, and fix what's broken about you.

This topic reminds me of my situation many years ago. I remember learning late one night that my wife had an appointment with a divorce attorney the next morning. We were hours from "done." Who would have ever thought that we could turn things around at that point?

It's *never* too late! In fact (and here's real food for thought), very often the turning point in a marriage is when a couple hits rock bottom. Sometimes it's not until things couldn't get worse that they can get better.

YOUR RELATIONSHIP HOMEWORK

Phase 1

Take the Pressure Off Your Spouse

Begin YOUR Fixing

Exercise 1.7

Your Goals

What are your relationship objectives? List your goals in the space provided below.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Spouse 2

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Exercise 1.8
Rebuilding Trust

In some of the audio presentations you learned about how to rebuild trust. *Both* spouses *can* play a role in restoring trust to a marriage. Regardless of whether you breached the trust in your marriage or were the one violated, and whether you're in the Duo Track or the Lone Ranger Track, *you can* make strides to rebuilt trust and so I strongly recommend you complete the exercises below that relate to your role.

For the spouse who broke the trust. PART 1.

As you learned during an audio presentation, your role in restoring trust to your marriage is to make and keep lots of promises...make and keep, make and keep, and then make and keep. It's not hard. The hard part is waiting. The hard part is having patience.

In the space provided below, list 7 things that you will promise your spouse this week (1 per day if you want). It doesn't matter if they are little promises or big ones. It makes no difference what you promise; just promise and come through, promise and come through.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

For the spouse who broke the trust. PART 2.

Your next assignment is to set up some reminder mechanism for yourself so that you do the above exercise *every week*. I can almost guarantee you that 7 promises won't do it. Depending on what you did to break the trust in your marriage, it may take more like 700. So whether you use Outlook, your Smartphone, a Franklin Planner, or sticky notes, decide *now* how you're going to stay on track you began in the exercise above. Record your commitment here:

For the spouse who is trying to learn to trust again. PART 1.

As you learned during an audio presentation, you can help your spouse rebuild trust with you (whether they want to or not, i.e. Lone Ranger Track) by inviting them to make promises you know they can and will keep.

In the space provided below, list 7 things that you could invite your spouse to promise to do. Important: make sure they're slam dunks! In other words, don't challenge your spouse. You want them to come through each time. Make it easy until the trust begins to rebuild.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

For the spouse who is trying to learn to trust again. PART 2.

As you learned, *full disclosure* gives you information. But information is unrelated to trust. You could be sitting right next to someone in complete awareness of their whereabouts, but still not trust them. You might not be curious about their whereabouts, but it does not mean you trust them.

Information is more connected to curiosity than trust.

The irony of the *full disclosure* approach to rebuilding trust is that trust is not about finding comfort through information; it's about being comfortable when you DON'T have information. That's what trust is... "I don't know where you are or what you're doing, but I know I'm safe."

Since the absence of information is necessary for trust to blossom, the acquisition of information actually inhibits the process.

It's also ridiculous advice from a practical perspective. No matter how hard one tries to know what's going on in their spouse's life, there will always be unknowns. Unless you're going to attach yourself at the hip, you can't know everything. So from a practical perspective, you'll never achieve comfort by acquiring information because there'll always be unknowns that will leave you feeling uncertain.

Acquiring information in an effort to build trust is like trying to make more money in order to be happy. It's not getting more of it that's the key; it's learning to be at peace with LESS.

Your assignment below: make a list of the ways you're attempting to acquire information and make a commitment to stop. I know acquiring information makes you feel better, but it's making your situation worse. There are other ways to cope with your anxiety and ill feelings (which are discussed in this program). But spying or other such activities is not helpful.

YOUR SPYING TECHNIQUES	I PROMISE TO STOP
1. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

For the spouse who is trying to learn to trust again. PART 3.

Remember the story I told you about my son who was learning to swim? Sometimes we just need someone to believe in us in order for us to realize the latent potential within us.

We all have the ability to be trustworthy. In the depths of our heart, we want to be a person of integrity. We want to be trusted. But sometimes we have to be given trust first. Sometimes we need for someone to believe in us.

I want you to try to look into the soul of your spouse. Try to see the seeds of greatness within them. Give them your trust. Even if they don't deserve it; trust them anyway. Believe in them. Your faith in them will affirm their sense of worth and inspire them to meet your expectations. Believe in your spouse, not in what you see, but in what you don't see but you know is there.

The great poet Goethe said, "Treat a man as he is and he will remain as he is; treat a man as he can and should be and he will become as he can and should be."

This is another reason why the "full disclosure" approach is disastrous. You end up treating someone like they can't be trusted, essentially affirming for them that they are untrustworthy. And you'll get just what you expect.

But if you treat your spouse as a person of the highest moral standards, they will be inspired to realize the greatness that you see in them.

Let's get specific. How can you communicate to your spouse that you believe in them? How can you let them know that they can be a person of integrity? Can you simply tell them? Would they appreciate that message in letter from you? Can you find just the right Hallmark card? In the space provided below, record your commitment (and your method) to express faith in your spouse.

- I will express to my spouse that I see the potential for integrity within them.

I will express myself in the following way: _____

Personal Journal

Opportunity

Questions for Contemplation:

- How does it feel to begin this program? Do you have fears, concerns, or worries? What are your hopes and dreams? What are you expecting?
- How does it feel to be prompted to take responsibility for your situation? Specifically, how are you going to go about your fixing?
- How does it feel to be asked to “back off” your spouse?
- How did you feel delineating the history of your love life?
- In general, how are you feeling? What are you thinking? What’s in your heart right now? What’s on your mind?

Phase 2

A SURPRISING SOLUTION FOR YOUR MARITAL SITUATION

By now it should be clear that your marital problems are *not* the problem. And a solution to those problems is *not* your answer. The problem in your marriage is the lack of connection between you and your spouse. And love is your answer. In the words of Samson Raphael Hirsch:

“If two people have unfriendly feelings toward each other, they take offense at anything and everything between them. Harsh feelings are not the outcome of a quarrel; they are the cause of it.”

The way to renew your marriage is to *temporarily* table your problems and issues and implement a series of positive relationship habits that will slowly but surely transform the root of your marriage.

Of course, this is no small task. Any normal person would find it challenging to put aside the issues plaguing their relationship. And how do you implement positive relationship habits when you're feeling negative about your spouse and your marriage?

Below and in the subsequent phases are a series of specific tools and exercises that will help you conquer these challenges. Undoubtedly, you will find some of the tools and exercises more helpful or relevant than others, but if you diligently go through all of them, overall, you will discover the support you need to succeed.

Exercise 2.1
Send Your Problems Away

STEP 1: In the space provided on the next page, make a list of the issues and problems polluting your relationship. What are you fighting about? Where's your anger coming from? What do you want to fix?

Duo Track: Discuss this exercise and make one list *together*. Do not discuss the issues themselves; only discuss which issues you want to "send away." Hold the pen together as you write the list. Don't worry, penmanship doesn't count. 😊

STEP 2: Address an envelope to anyone you would feel comfortable sending your list to or you can send it to:

Marriage Fitness with Mort Fertel
4701-B Falls Road
Baltimore, MD 21209

STEP 3: Tear your list out of the binder and say, "For the benefit of our marriage, I/we *temporarily* send these problems away and promise not to talk about them, fight about them, or allow them to pollute our relationship."

STEP 4: Make a copy of your list and put the copy in a safe hiding place (you'll need to retrieve it toward the end of the program).

STEP 5: Fold the original list, put it in the envelope, and mail it to me (or to someone else). The purpose of this exercise is not simply for you to mail your list. The objective is not physical; it's emotional. When you fold up your list and put it in the envelope, "put away" your problems. When you mail your list, "send away" your issues. I know these are the issues that plague you. But for now, let them go.

Duo Track: The physical task of mailing your list should be a completely "we" experience. Do it *together*. Fold the paper *together*, put it in the envelope *together*, lick the envelope *together* (now that could be fun 😊), seal the envelope *together*, affix a stamp *together*, until you finally place it in the mailbox *together*.

OUR PROBLEMS & ISSUES

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____

Exercise 2.2
Identify Your Trigger Points

The issues and problems you mailed away could return to pollute your relationship in an instant. It's one thing to mail an envelope; it's quite another to break old habits and re-script new ways of interacting.

As much as you may understand intellectually everything you've read and listened to thus far, the logical basis for the Marriage Fitness approach to relationship success may not be enough to help you in the heat of the moment.

You and your spouse have certain "tapes" you play over and over. In other words, certain things trigger the same argument or bad feelings and the sequence that follows is scripted based on years of unhealthy conditioning. As soon as that first domino falls, the rest of your interaction is predictable.

However, if you recognized the first domino—if you knew what was triggering your downspin—you could stop it before it begins.

I'm going to give you tools to help you prevent destructive interaction between you and your spouse and the whirlwind of ill feelings inside you, but first you have to identify your trigger points. What's the first domino?

In the space provided below, list the topics of five arguments you recently had with your spouse. On the opposite line, try to work back and figure out what started the argument, and list it there.

<u>Argument</u>	<u>What Triggered It</u>
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____

In the space provided on the next page, make a list of the destructive discussions/behaviors/feelings that repeat in your marriage *and*, most importantly, what triggers them.

Duo Track: Discuss this exercise and make *one* list.

For example, if your spouse coming home late makes you feel unimportant and triggers an argument about reliability, then you would write:

<u>Hurtful Discussions/Behaviors/Feelings</u>	<u>Trigger Points</u>
<i>Feeling unimportant</i>	<i>Coming home late</i>
<i>Arguments about reliability</i>	<i>Coming home late</i>
<i>Feeling Lack of Trust</i>	<i>Coming home late</i>

HURTFUL DISCUSSIONS/BEHAVIORS/FEELINGS & THEIR TRIGGER POINTS

Hurtful Discussions/Behaviors/Feelings

Trigger Points

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Exercise 2.3
Sign on the Dotted Line

My wife and I once received a call from a real estate broker who had a prospective buyer for our house. In the ensuing months, this couple visited the house three times (once with their parents), hired an appraiser and an attorney, met with me personally to discuss some issues, spoke with the broker no less than ten times, and made a verbal offer which we accepted.

The due diligence process with this prospective buyer was as extensive as it gets in residential real estate. However, they didn't sign the contract. They wanted the house. They probably already discussed where they would put their furniture. But without a signed contract, the deed still said "Fertel" and they still lived in a rental.

Your signature changes everything. It's reflective of a higher level of commitment.

In fact, I'm going to suggest throughout your Marriage Fitness program that you sign your name to your commitments.

The contracts in this workbook are for both Duo Track *and* Lone Ranger Track users. If you're a Lone Ranger Track user, consider your contract with yourself, with God, or with me.

If you need to edit the contracts in order to feel comfortable signing them, then do so. If you're not comfortable signing them "as is" or with slight editing, then you should explore deeply your hesitation because it's a sign of a problem within you and/or with your marriage. Feel free to discuss with me any hesitations during your private sessions.

Review and sign the contract below.

CONTRACT TO TEMPORARILY SET ASIDE MARITAL PROBLEMS & ISSUES

On this _____ day of _____ in the year _____, I, the undersigned, hereby agree to temporarily put aside the problems in our marriage. I agree to temporarily not seek solutions to them, discuss them, complain about them, or argue about them. I agree to utilize the strategies offered in *The Complete Marriage Fitness Workbook & Personal Journal* to diffuse potentially explosive situations. I agree to not only extend an effort in this regard, but to help my spouse achieve the same. I agree to try my best to diffuse situations even if my spouse is confrontational. I also agree to forgive myself and my spouse if either of us breaches this agreement.

Print Name (1) _____

Signature _____

Spouse 2

Print Name (2) _____

Signature _____

Marriage Fitness Tools

I'll be the first to admit that articulating the Marriage Fitness approach and completing exercises like the ones above are a lot easier than succeeding to put your problems aside. To pull that off, you'll need tools.

Here are some practical tools to help you temporarily keep your problems on the sidelines.

Some of the tools below may not be applicable for your circumstances. That's okay. You don't have to use all of them. Review the tools below and highlight the ones that have potential for your marriage. All you need is one tool that fits your circumstances that you could use repeatedly and you'll have everything you need to succeed.

Although I expect you'll find the below tools helpful, in the final analysis, succeeding to table your issues is a matter of discipline and self awareness, two character traits crucial to the success of renewing your marriage. You'll get counsel about how to develop these character traits throughout the program.

Tool 2.1

Raise the White Flag

Did you ever create a physical reminder for yourself? Did you ever tie a string around your finger or put something by your front door? Physical things can remind you of an emotional state or to behave a certain way.

And certain physical things represent specific emotions or behaviors. For example, a gavel represents decorum. A white flag means "cease fire."

Here's your task: Get a pencil, a chopstick, a ruler, or a stick and make a white flag using a piece of paper or a cloth.

Duo Track: The moment you recognize a trigger point from your list above, find your white flag and waive it. Use it to remind each other that you recognize a trigger point and that if you don't "cease fire," there's likely to be another all-out war. As soon as you see the white flag, remember what you've learned and don't let your old "tapes" overtake you.

If your spouse doesn't respond to you waving the white flag, do your part anyway. Your spouse won't be able to fight with someone who won't fight back. Try to diffuse the situation yourself.

Lone Ranger Track: The moment you recognize a trigger point, find your white flag and use it to remind yourself to diffuse the situation. Look at your white flag, remember what you learned, and don't play the destructive role you usually do. Even if your spouse is on the attack, control your actions and your words. You might feel like a punching bag, but the damage to your marriage will be less than if you stepped into the ring.

Tool 2.2
Code Words
(Duo Track only)

In the event you can't find your white flag, or if you're not home, try using a code word to accomplish the same objective.

If you try to reason with your spouse in the heat of the moment and explain that he/she is violating what you learned, you probably won't get a warm reception. In fact, your effort to remind your spouse to put the issue aside is likely to fuel the argument and further aggravate the situation. But imagine if, as soon as you recognized a trigger point, you said to your spouse, "peanut butter cup." Rather than fueling the heat of the moment, such a silly comment might successfully remind your spouse of what you learned and diffuse the situation.

Talk with each other and agree on a silly code word that each of you could say upon recognizing a trigger point that would help the other "get a hold of themselves" and remember your goals.

This is a particularly helpful strategy when you're amongst your children, family, or friends, because you can communicate something personal about your marriage without compromising your privacy. Whoever hears you use this code word may think you're strange, but at least your privacy is in tact and you will have diffused the moment.

Talk with each other, agree on your code word, and write it in the space provided below.

Our Code Word is: _____

Tool 2.3
Walk Away

If you recognize a trigger point, leave the room for a few minutes. Say, "Excuse me for a moment," and just walk away.

Arguments need spontaneity. If you interrupt the flow of the situation, you may succeed to diffuse it.

Leaving the room also gives you a few minutes to collect your thoughts and gather the strength to behave with intention rather than based on years of scripting.

When you leave the room, you may also find it useful to get your white flag.

In any event, make sure you return so that your spouse doesn't feel ignored.

Tool 2.4
Capitulate

In military strategy, sometimes you have to sacrifice a battle in order to win the war. And, of course, the ultimate goal of all just wars is peace.

Sacrificing a “battle” can help you achieve peace in your marriage too. Next time your spouse is fighting to have their way, give in. Do what they want.

Capitulating is not a long term solution. You won’t be stuck acquiescing forever. In fact, the purpose of capitulating in the short term is to reach *real* resolution in the long term.

Use sound judgment when you’re considering this tool. For example, don’t give-in if your spouse wants to take your 7-year-old daughter to the local bar. Don’t do it if your spouse wants you to perform a sexual act that makes you uncomfortable. On the other hand, if your spouse wants you to pick up the kids at soccer practice even though it’s their turn, you could capitulate without harm.

You need to be able to distinguish between a jugular issue and one that is *temporarily* harmless. Make that distinction *now* so you’re comfortable using this tool when the opportunity presents itself. You don’t want to capitulate on a serious issue and regret it later. List below the issues and problems you’re constantly arguing about. Consider each one and rate it either “jugular” or “temporarily harmless.”

Issues

- | | | |
|-------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Jugular | <input type="checkbox"/> Harmless |
| _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Jugular | <input type="checkbox"/> Harmless |
| _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Jugular | <input type="checkbox"/> Harmless |
| _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Jugular | <input type="checkbox"/> Harmless |
| _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Jugular | <input type="checkbox"/> Harmless |

Spouse 2

- | | | |
|-------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Jugular | <input type="checkbox"/> Harmless |
| _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Jugular | <input type="checkbox"/> Harmless |
| _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Jugular | <input type="checkbox"/> Harmless |
| _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Jugular | <input type="checkbox"/> Harmless |
| _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Jugular | <input type="checkbox"/> Harmless |

Make a mental note based on your determination of “jugular” or “harmless” as to when it would be appropriate to use this tool and capitulate.

Tool 2.5

Change the Subject Early in the Conversation

The chances are good that you've had the same arguments over and over again. My guess is that you've had them so many times that you were able to successfully identify the trigger points above. One way to diffuse a pending argument is to change the subject as soon as you recognize a trigger point.

It will be annoying to your spouse if you say, "What's the weather forecast for tomorrow?" Therefore, I recommend you keep an inventory of subject matters that would be an effective distraction to the pending argument. Something like the following might work: "Oh my gosh, I think I forgot to pay the electric bill. Did you take care of that?" Or, "Oh no, did we miss your mother's birthday?"

Those are just examples of matters that might be significant enough to serve as a legitimate distraction. But what will be effective varies with every marriage. What would work for you? Make a list below of subject matters significant enough to successfully distract you and your spouse from a brewing argument.

Inventory of Decoy Subject Matters

Tool 2.6

"Let's Discuss this with Mort"

(Duo Track Only)

Many people who order this program also have private phone sessions with me (for more information, see www.MortFertel.com). If you and your spouse have regularly private sessions with me, then the moment you recognize a trigger point, say to your spouse, "Let's discuss this with Mort." Then, during our session, (if it's still a pressing matter), I can help you navigate through the discussion or advise you to table it.

Exercise 2.4
The Power of Love

You've been learning about how love changes everything. It is the solution to your marital issues.

Think about when you fell in love with your spouse and how it influenced the rest of your life. Describe the experience below, and, most importantly, describe your recollection of how falling in love affected your work, study, health, appearance, and other relationships. Notice how connecting with your spouse was a healing experience. (2nd Spouse: Use next page.)

Exercise 2.5
The Consequences of Lacking Love

Love puts its imprint on everything. Just as falling in love beautifies everything in life; falling out of love changes things too.

Make a list of your spouse's character flaws, personality weaknesses, and incompatibilities that have become apparent since you married. Don't include on your list the ones you knew all along; only list the ones that revealed themselves *after* your marriage started to deteriorate.

After you complete your list, consider the possibility that these issues revealed themselves *as a result of* you and your spouse losing your connection. To the extent that is true; what would you conclude is the way to get those issues to stop revealing themselves?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

Spouse 2

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

Exercise 2.6
The Choice is Yours

Okay, so your marriage is on the rocks. But the outcome is *not* up to your spouse or left to fate. You can choose. Check the box below that reflects your choice.

- I'll settle for being roommates.
- I'll chip away at problems and issues using communication techniques and problem solving strategies.
- I'm done. I'm filing for divorce.
- I'm ready to put in the time and effort to rebuild the foundation of my marriage and transform my relationship.
- I'm undecided

Spouse 2

- I'll settle for being roommates.
- I'll chip away at problems and issues using communication techniques and problem solving strategies.
- I'm done. I'm filing for divorce.
- I'm ready to put in the time and effort to recreate love with my spouse and transform my relationship.
- I'm undecided

Exercise 2.7
What *Really* Changed

STEP 1: In the left column below, list the qualities and characteristics of your spouse that you fell in love with years ago.

STEP 2: In the right column below, list the qualities and characteristics that now drive you nuts.

STEP 3: Draw a line connecting related listings in *opposite* columns.

STEP 4: See next page.

For example:

Qualities You Fell in Love With

Qualities that Drive You Nuts

Thrifty

Controlling

Organized

Flirtatious

Social

Cheap

Spouse 2

Qualities You Fell in Love With

Qualities that Drive You Nuts

STEP 4: In the space provided below, write a few sentences explaining the point of this exercise. If you get stuck, review the Introduction and Chapter 1 of *Marriage Fitness*. It's important that you understand the meaning of this exercise.

Exercise 2.8
Saying “I Love You” and Other Demanding Mistakes

As you learned, saying “I love you” is not simply an expression of your love; it’s also a demand for your spouse to express their love. This may be counterproductive, particularly if you’re in the Lone Ranger Track.

There are other common expressions that have an implicit demand for a certain response too, which might also be counterproductive. For example, “I’m sorry” is also a solicitation for “I forgive you.” But is your spouse ready to forgive you? Have you done what’s necessary to help your spouse heal from your offense?

Analyze closely the conversations you have with your spouse. Are you making statements that are also imposing uncomfortable demands on your spouse? List them below along with an alternative way you could communicate what you’re feeling without making an implicit demand.

STATEMENTS THAT HAVE IMPLICIT DEMANDS	ALTERNATIVE
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____

YOUR RELATIONSHIP HOMEWORK

Phase 2

Table Your Marital Problems & Issues

Continue

Take the Pressure Off Your Spouse

Continue YOUR Fixing

Personal Journal *Opportunity*

Questions for Contemplation:

- How are you feeling about the progress you're making? Are you getting impatient or can you appreciate the deliberateness of the process?
- What are your concerns about tabling your issues? Do you think you can do it? How do you think your spouse will respond?
- What did you learn in the last section of the workbook? How is your understanding of your situation changing?
- In general, how are you feeling? What are you thinking? What's in your heart right now? What's on your mind?

Phase 3

THE MARRIAGE MISSION STATEMENT

Everything is created twice—first in your mind and then in your life. Every physical creation is preceded by a mental creation. For example, you need a blueprint before you can build a house. If you begin construction before the architect is finished, you'll have expensive change orders.

This is what happens in most marriages. Most couples don't have a clear vision of the relationship they want. But for years they build a marriage nonetheless. The result? Costly change orders.

In the exercise below, you'll be prompted to write a marriage mission statement—a mental creation of the relationship you desire.

Your marriage mission statement is a crucial step to creating a new marriage. In order to build the relationship you want, you first must articulate *what* you want.

Your marriage will be determined by one of two things: your past or your dreams. In other words, your marriage will either be by design or by default. If you don't dream, your past will determine your future. In other words, your relationship will be scripted according to your childhood, past hurts, and unhealthy relationship habits passed down from generation to generation. But a compelling vision can conquer your old "tapes" and be the driving force for a new future.

If you don't stand for something you will fall for anything.

Writing a marriage mission statement is not a flaky exercise. And I'm not asking you to forget about your current situation. In fact, a strong vision is useful because it gives you the strength to face the brutal facts of your current situation.

In other words, without the ability to draw on a dream for hope and inspiration, you could be crushed by or deny your current reality. Some people are out of touch with the seriousness of their circumstances because they don't have the strength to honestly face it. A new dream gives you an anchor in hope and therefore the strength to be honest with yourself.

Start thinking of yourself as a "transition person." A "transition person" is someone who changes the way things will be for their descendents.

In a deeply psychological way, your situation is a result of your childhood roots. And your parents passed on those roots from their parents, and so on down the line. Your children will face similar circumstances unless you say, "That's it! It stops with me. My children will have a better marriage because I'm going to learn how to succeed in love." That change starts with a new vision.

If you do nothing, your future will be determined by your past. Whether it's nurture or nature that's to blame, your marriage will fall victim. But a dream for a different future is the antidote for the baggage of the past. Dream! One day that dream will be your life.

Our minds are like a garden—whatever seed you plant will grow. But if you plant nothing, then all you get are nasty weeds. Absent of productive, positive thoughts, your mind will naturally drift toward negativity. In the words of Henry David Thoreau, "In the long run men hit only what they aim at."

We may not be able to change our *circumstances* overnight, but a new dream changes *who we are* right now. And eventually, *who we are* determines the love in our marriage.

A person is what he aspires for. In order to know myself, I ask: What are the ends I am striving to attain? What are the values I care for most?

*Abraham Joshua Heschel
From Man is Not Alone*

People tend to allow the mood of their marriage to be determined by circumstances around them (your spouse, for example) rather than values from within them. Your marriage mission statement puts you in control. You can direct the future of your marriage through the power of your thoughts.

I remember when Cindy came to me for private phone sessions. Her circumstances were worse than any case I ever handled before. Cindy didn't have the cooperation of her husband and she was so depressed and angry that she couldn't *do* anything healthy for her marriage. But there was one thing Cindy could do—write and recite a new vision for her marriage. Cindy was happy to dream a new dream!

In retrospect, Cindy and I realized that her marriage mission statement infused good energy into her heart and gave her the strength to begin new behaviors that put her marriage on a path to renewal.

Research proves that there is a correlation between our thoughts and the physical reality of our life.

There is a famous study which showed that the health of two different groups of sick people improved when they were given a pill; even though one group was given a sugar pill rather than medicine. The fact that the group that was given a sugar pill *thought* they were given medicine caused their health to improve. This is called the *placebo effect*.

In terms of our health, the opposite is true too. It is also well known that some illnesses are psychosomatic.

The above examples show that our thoughts impact *our* life. But our thoughts impact *other people's* lives too.

Double-blind studies proved that sick people healed better when *other people* thought/prayed about their health. Studies show the same result even when the sick people didn't know that other people were praying for them, which eliminates the placebo effect. These studies (and others like them) prove that our thoughts and the reality of the world are linked! Let's link them *positively* for you!

*One ship drives east
and another drives west,
While the self-same winds that blow;
It's the set of the sails and not the gales,
That tells us the way to go.
Like the winds of the sea
are the ways of fate,
As we voyage along through life;
It's the set of the soul
that decides the goal,
And not the calm or the strife.*

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

<p>Exercise 3.1</p> <p>The Characteristics of Your Marriage</p>
--

Before you wordsmith your marriage mission statement, list below the 9 most important values or characteristics for your marriage and a corresponding example of how each goal or characteristic might manifest itself.

Duo Track: discuss and decide *together*.

<u>5 Goals/Characteristics for Our Marriage</u>	<u>An Example of How it will Manifest</u>
---	---

Example: Love

Giving Thoughtful Gifts

Example: Trust

Be Consistently On Time

- | | |
|----------|-------|
| 1. _____ | _____ |
| 2. _____ | _____ |
| 3. _____ | _____ |
| 4. _____ | _____ |
| 5. _____ | _____ |
| 6. _____ | _____ |
| 7. _____ | _____ |
| 8. _____ | _____ |
| 9. _____ | _____ |

*Good thoughts bear good fruit, bad thoughts bear
bad fruit—and man is his own gardener.*

- James Allen

Exercise 3.2

Crafting Your Marriage Mission Statement

Your marriage mission statement should *not* include statements about problems you intend to fix or issues you want to resolve. It should not address the past at all. Your marriage mission statement should be a vision based on ideals not a corrective statement based on your circumstances.

You may find it helpful to think about and/or talk about the following questions in preparation for crafting your marriage mission statement:

- What kind of a spouse do you want to be to each other?
- How do you want to be treated by each other?
- How do you want to go about resolving conflict?
- How do you want to handle money in the context of your marriage?
- What type of marriage model do you want to exemplify to your children?
- How will you help each other nurture the potential in your children?
- How will you discipline your children?
- How will you treat each other's families?
- What traditions do you want to establish for your marriage?

Here are two examples of marriage mission statements.

Our marriage will be a loving, fun and healthy marriage based on mutual respect and trust. We vow to show each other our love through daily affection, thoughtful gifts and tokens, and physical intimacy. We commit ourselves to have fun together and have laughter in our lives daily. We will work together to build respect and trust by paying attention to details. Our dream for the future includes living on the water and skiing in the winter. We commit to put each other first to realize our dream for a better marriage. We will accomplish our mission with gifts and tokens, jokes and humor, diet and exercise, hugs and kisses, intimacy, joint planning, and weekly family meetings.

*T & S, Ellicott City, MD
(Duo Track)*

My mission statement for our marriage is to be each others best friend, to feel love and appreciated, to respect and trust one another, and to be one another's greatest support in good and bad times. Hugs, kisses and sex will be welcome and we'll smile when we think of one another. We will look forward to going places and doing things together. Our wedding rings will be worn with pride. It will be a marriage where we cannot imagine spending our lives with anyone else.

*L.S., Siren, WI
(Lone Ranger Track)*

In the space provided on the next page, write a first draft of your marriage mission statement in paragraph form utilizing the goals and examples you listed above and any other language that will inspire you.

Duo Track: Do *not* write separate statements and then join them. Craft one vision statement *together*.

MARRIAGE MISSION STATEMENT

Reading Your Marriage Vision Statement

The crafting of a marriage mission statement is a valuable exercise. If you were diligent about the instructions, you identified the primary values you envision for your marriage and specific actions that would manifest them.

When you're in touch with your mission, you're more likely to behave in a way that will make your dream come true. But how do you stay in touch with your mission? How will your marriage mission statement motivate your behavior one month from now when you're in the heat of the moment? Will you remember what it says?

The sad truth is that we're more likely to be thinking about our favorite television program than the values we cherish in our marriage. But that's partly because the television network reminds us using promotional spots.

What's in front of your face is what will be in your mind. So if you want your marriage mission to be present, you have to remind yourself of it.

YOUR RELATIONSHIP HOMEWORK

Phase 3

Read Your Marriage Mission Statement Aloud Daily

Continue

Table Your Marital Problems & Issues

Take the Pressure Off Your Spouse

Continue YOUR Fixing

Reality Check

You purchased this Marriage Fitness program to change your relationship. You are to be commended for such a courageous initiative. It took self-awareness and humility—both admirable character traits. But there is no quick fix and it's going to take more than your credit card number to transform your marriage. To realize your goal, you're going to have to pay the price of your effort.

The fact that you bought this program means that you *want* to renew your marriage and that you're *thinking* of a revamped relationship. Great! Your *will* and your *thoughts* are the right start. That's why you created a marriage mission statement. However, you'll need to be a person of *integrity* too.

What's integrity? Integrity is when your actions are in line with your thoughts. When what you say is *integrated* with what you do, you are a person of integrity.

Purchasing this program was a clear statement of your will. Doing the work—aligning your life with your will—would be an act of integrity.

Purchasing this course but not doing the work would be like telling one flower to grow while you water another. "Firings will continue until morale improves." If you don't have integrity; you will not get results.

In business, you can improve efficiency. When it comes to *things*, there's always a faster way. But in marriage—when it comes to relationships—there are no short-cuts. You can't buy a changed marriage. Your relationship is governed by the law of the harvest. You can't change the fruit without changing the root. If you haven't already, start cultivating. Get to work!

Personal Journal Opportunity

Questions for Contemplation:

- What was it like for you to consider the values you desire to be in your marriage? How many were currently present? How many were missing? How did it feel to face the reality of the gap?
- What was the process of crafting your marriage mission statement like? Fun? Frustrating? Revealing? Profound?
- In general, how are you feeling? What are you thinking? What's in your heart right now? What's on your mind?

Phase 4

THE COMPATIBILITY MYTH

Talk about a paradigm shift, right? Well, by now I'm sure you've got it. Succeeding in marriage has very little to do with compatibility. So don't worry if you and your spouse aren't compatible. You don't have to be compatible to be happily married; you have to be soul mates. And being soul mates is about forging a much more profound connection than shared interests.

You might be thinking: "But I didn't find my soul mate. This can't be my soul mate."

Are you ready for the good news? A soul mate is not someone you find. Your soul mate is someone with whom you build a core connection. In other words, it's not a matter of luck. It takes skill and wisdom.

In the subsequent phases, you'll learn how to forge this connection with your spouse. But in the meantime, let's come to a deeper understand of which aspect of yourselves you're trying to connect and what it feels like to be soul mates versus role mates.

<p>Exercise 4.1 Identifying Your Character</p>
--

There are 2 aspects to yourself: your character and your soul. In other words, there's the role you play in life and there's the actor within you. The ability to feel this difference within you (and about you) is essential to creating the proper connection with your spouse.

Let's first get in touch with your *character*. (Remember what was discussed in Chapter 2 of *Marriage Fitness*. Your character includes much more than simply your character traits. Your character includes everything you can know about yourself.

In the space provided below, make a list of everything you *know* about yourself. Describe yourself exhaustively. (Spouse 2: see next page)

Exercise 4.2

Identifying Your Character II

STEP 1: Think about how much you've changed over the years. You can easily see some of these changes in your photo album. Think through the stages of your life and what you were like during them. Think about a time in your life when you were very different from the way you are now. Recall your appearance, your health, your physique, your social life, your family life, your work life, your finances, your abilities, your environment, and your outlook on life. (Recall your personality and disposition which are part of your character too. They may have changed, but as explained in *Marriage Fitness*, they usually do not). In the space provided on the next page, make another list describing yourself during this stage of your life.

STEP 2: Compare this list with the list you made earlier. Notice how much you've changed. Now, consider that you are the same. You've changed, but you were always you, right? It's the same knower knowing a new character. One part of you changed, but another part of you is constant.

STEP 3: Answer the following 2 questions:

The part of yourself you described in this and the previous exercise is called your_____.

The part of yourself doing the describing, in other words, the part of yourself knowing yourself is called your_____.

DESCRIPTION OF YOURSELF

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
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Spouse 2

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<p>Exercise 4.3 The Compatibility Myth</p>
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STEP 1: In the left column, list the ways you were compatible when you fell in love.

STEP 2: Check the appropriate box indicating whether or not you're still compatible in that area.

<u>Initial Compatibilities</u>	<u>Still Compatible?</u>	
	YES	NO
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

STEP 3: In the space provided below, list ways you'd like to be compatible in the future.

STEP 4: Check the box indicating whether or not that compatibility *could* change.

<u>Desired Compatibilities</u>	<u>Compatibility at Risk?</u>	
	YES	NO
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

A relationship based on compatibility will *always* be vulnerable. But as long as you maintain the right relationship habits, a soul mate can be forever.

Personal Journal Opportunity

Questions for Contemplation:

- What *was* your understanding of a soul mate? What is it now? Do you think your spouse is your soul mate? Do you think your spouse can be your soul mate?
- In general, how are you feeling? What are you thinking? What's in your heart right now? What's on your mind?

Phase 5

HOW TO LIVE LOVE

So you see, one of the keys to lasting love is setting up the right lifestyle. Just as diet and exercise is a lifestyle that determines your physical health, your lifestyle habits regarding your relationship determine your marital health.

Now let's work on understanding your lifestyle and adjusting it so that you accomplish your relationship goals.

Exercise 5.1

Priority Assessment

If you began a physical fitness program, you would first want to establish your "baseline"—a measure of where you are now. A good assessment helps you focus on the areas that need the most attention and allows you to track your overall progress. Marriage Fitness is no different.

Go to your computer and log onto www.MortFertel.com/assessments, click on "priority," and take the electronic assessment. This assessment automatically measures the degree of importance you give to your marriage and provides you with a "score." Record your score below.

Name _____ Date _____

Priority Assessment Score _____

Spouse 2

Name _____ Date _____

Priority Assessment Score _____

Exercise 5.2
Your Wake-Up Call

STEP 1: List your values in the space provided *in order of priority*. (Spouse 2: see next page)

<u>Example</u>	<u>Your Priorities</u>
1. <u>Marriage</u>	1. _____
2. <u>Kids</u>	2. _____
3. <u>Work</u>	3. _____
4. <u>Health & Fitness</u>	4. _____
5. <u>Community Service</u>	5. _____
6. <u>Friends</u>	6. _____
7. <u>Coin Collection</u>	7. _____

STEP 2: Place a check mark next to the activities you do *at least once per week*.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise | <input type="checkbox"/> Watch TV | <input type="checkbox"/> Read a Magazine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read a Book | <input type="checkbox"/> Play a Sport | <input type="checkbox"/> Play a Game |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have a Meeting | <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual Practice | <input type="checkbox"/> Read the Newspaper |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Email Friends | <input type="checkbox"/> Call a Friend | <input type="checkbox"/> Surf the Net |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go Shopping | <input type="checkbox"/> Play with Kids | <input type="checkbox"/> Hobby |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meet a Friend | <input type="checkbox"/> Meet a Family Member | |

STEP 3: Place a check mark next to these activities you do *at least once per week*.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go out <i>alone</i> with my spouse on a date | <input type="checkbox"/> Do my spouse a favor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Turn off the TV to be with my spouse | <input type="checkbox"/> Buy my spouse a gift |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wear my spouse's favorite outfit | <input type="checkbox"/> Call my spouse to say "hi." |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ask my spouse to help me solve a problem | <input type="checkbox"/> Gaze at a photo of my spouse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ask my spouse about their hobby | <input type="checkbox"/> Ask my spouse for their opinion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lovingly touch my spouse (other than foreplay or a sexual advance) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do one of my spouse's chores without being asked | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anticipate my spouse's needs and fulfill them | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ask my spouse about their needs | |

STEP 4: Review your answers in steps 1-3 above. Are most of your check marks in step 2 or step 3? If you were grading how well your values are aligned with your weekly habits, what grade would you assign yourself? Circle your grade.

My Grade: A B C D F

Spouse 2

STEP 1: List your values in the space provided *in order of priority*.

<u>Example</u>	<u>Your Priorities</u>
1. <u>Marriage</u>	1. _____
2. <u>Kids</u>	2. _____
3. <u>Work</u>	3. _____
4. <u>Health & Fitness</u>	4. _____
5. <u>Community Service</u>	5. _____
6. _____ <u>Friends</u>	6. _____
7. _____ <u>Coin Collection</u>	7. _____

STEP 2: Place a check mark next to the activities you do *at least once per week*.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise | <input type="checkbox"/> Watch TV | <input type="checkbox"/> Read a Magazine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read a Book | <input type="checkbox"/> Play a Sport | <input type="checkbox"/> Play a Game |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have a Meeting | <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual Practice | <input type="checkbox"/> Read the Newspaper |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Email Friends | <input type="checkbox"/> Call a Friend | <input type="checkbox"/> Surf the Net |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go Shopping | <input type="checkbox"/> Play with Kids | <input type="checkbox"/> Hobby |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meet a Friend | <input type="checkbox"/> Meet a Family Member | |

STEP 3: Place a check mark next to these activities you do *at least once per week*.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go out <i>alone</i> with my spouse on a date | <input type="checkbox"/> Do my spouse a favor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Turn off the TV to be with my spouse | <input type="checkbox"/> Buy my spouse a gift |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wear my spouse's favorite outfit | <input type="checkbox"/> Call my spouse to say "hi." |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ask my spouse to help me solve a problem | <input type="checkbox"/> Gaze at a photo of my spouse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ask my spouse about their hobby | <input type="checkbox"/> Ask my spouse for their opinion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lovingly touch my spouse (other than foreplay or a sexual advance) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do one of my spouse's chores without being asked | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anticipate my spouse's needs and fulfill them | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ask my spouse about their needs | |

STEP 4: Review your answers in steps 1-3 above. Are most of your check marks in step 2 or step 3? If you were grading how well your values are aligned with your weekly habits, what grade would you assign yourself? Circle your grade.

My Grade: A B C D F

Exercise 5.3
Your Ideas for Putting Love First

Make a list in the space provided below of *new* actions you could initiate and current behaviors you could modify that would demonstrate that your marriage is taking a higher priority in your life.

NEW INITIATIVES

BEHAVIORS TO MODIFY

Spouse 2

NEW INITIATIVES

BEHAVIORS TO CEASE

Little Things Make a Big Difference

A woman named Cindy scheduled a series of private sessions with me. In one of our sessions, I noticed that Cindy was resistant to incorporating Touch Charges and Talk Charges into her relationship with her husband. She kept trying to change the subject. She said she wanted to discuss “bigger” matters. I couldn't imagine why she was so hesitant to do these 2 simple acts of love. Finally, I challenged Cindy and said, “Cindy, what's the problem. This is marriage renewal 101.”

Eventually, Cindy told me why she didn't want to talk about Touch Charges and Talk Charges. “My marriage is horrible.” Cindy said. “I need a BIG solution. I just don't think talking and touching is going to make a difference.”

Cindy expressed a common thought, but she couldn't be more wrong.

You don't succeed in marriage because of one Herculean event. There's no gift you can give, favor you can do, or letter you can write. When your marriage is on the rocks, it's common to want to “microwave” it better. But you can't. There's no quick fix. It took you years to get into this mess; it's going to take time for you to get out of it. And what's the way out? Listen carefully.

Successful spouses do *small things* in great ways for a long time. Do you want *real* change and *lasting* love in your marriage? Then establish the *right habits* and do them *consistently*.

I guaranteed Cindy that if she would talk and touch *regularly*, she would see a dramatic difference in her marriage. I promised Cindy that if I was wrong, I would personally fly to Nashville for a full day “house call” with Cindy and her husband for free. Cindy agreed to try. I've still never been to Nashville.

Og Mandino says, “Take great comfort in knowing that ALL great feats are accomplished one small step at a time.” *Take the small steps!* They make a big difference.

Most people with big problems are looking for a big solution. And that's their biggest problem.

My guess is that there was not one event that caused your marriage to deteriorate. Even if there was infidelity or some other dramatic event; the chances are good that your marriage was in big trouble long before that event.

Falling in love is quick and easy. After that, relationships wane and get restored slowly...one step at a time.

It's not enough to be there for your spouse in crisis. Marriage is about being there for your spouse thousands of times, day in and day out, for years. It's about a short chat on the phone, leaving a love note, doing a favor, helping out for no reason, bringing home a small gift, picking up the dry cleaning, asking the right question—it's about paying attention and focus. Good spouses do small things in great ways.

Exercise 5.4
Talk Charge Prep

Below is a list of Talk Charge ideas. Many of the ideas may not be appropriate for your situation. That's okay. If you can find a few that will work for you, then the list will have served its purpose.

The more you prepare for your Talk Charges the more impact they're likely to have on your relationship. This is particularly important if your spouse is obstinate and resisting communication with you. Don't just pick up the phone and dial. Think first! What would interest your spouse? What would they appreciate hearing? What would bore them? What should you *not* talk about?

STEP 1: Comb through the list below and circle the Talk Charge ideas that might work for you.

Spouse 2: There is a duplicate list behind this one.

TALK CHARGE IDEAS

- Tell your spouse a joke.
- Remember old times. "Honey, remember when..."
- Find something cute in the newspaper or a magazine to share.
- Research online something interesting about your spouse's hobby and call to share it with them.
- Tell your spouse about the dream you had last night.
- Share with your spouse a childhood memory.
- Express confidence in one of your spouse's decisions.
- What was "your song" when you were dating? Call your spouse and sing it to them.
- Ask how your spouse's day went... and really listen.
- Compliment something your spouse is wearing.
- Share a story from the news or your day that you thought was interesting.
- Tell your spouse that if you had to do it all over again, you'd choose them.
- Share a problem - thank your spouse for their concern.
- Remind your spouse to drive safely next time they leave the house.
- Call your spouse at work with the latest news.
- Say "I'm sorry" about a mistake you recently made.

- Think of 3 ways your spouse has made you a better person – tell them now.
- Compliment your spouse on your favorite physical trait.
- Look at your spouse when they are unaware of your gaze – share your feelings.
- Share what you most admire about your spouse.
- Thank your spouse for helping you through a challenging time in your life.
- Dig out the wedding album and reminisce.
- Express confidence in your spouse's ability to overcome a problem.
- Listen to your spouse's worries - ask how you can help.
- Before parting, tell your spouse you can't wait to see him/her again.
- Tell your spouse about an interesting person you just met.

STEP 2: In the space provided below, write in your own Talk Charge ideas. Your Talk Charges will be much more successful if you plan for them.

I want to emphasize again that it doesn't matter if 99% of the Talk Charge ideas above don't apply to your situation or your spouse. Your focus should *not* be on what won't work. Try not to be negative. Use the above exercise as a means to discovering the subject matters that *will* connect you with your spouse.

Spouse 2

STEP 1: Comb through the list below and circle the Talk Charge ideas that might work for you.

TALK CHARGE IDEAS

- Tell your spouse a joke.
- Remember old times. "Honey, remember when..."
- Find something cute in the newspaper or a magazine to share.
- Research online something interesting about your spouse's hobby and call to share it with them.
- Tell your spouse about the dream you had last night.
- Share with your spouse a childhood memory.
- Express confidence in one of your spouse's decisions.
- What was "your song" when you were dating? Call your spouse and sing it to them.
- Ask how your spouse's day went... and really listen.
- Compliment something your spouse is wearing.
- Share a story from the news or your day that you thought was interesting.
- Tell your spouse that if you had to do it all over again, you'd choose them.
- Share a problem - thank your spouse for their concern.
- Remind your spouse to drive safely next time they leave the house.
- Call your spouse at work with the latest news.
- Say "I'm sorry" about a mistake you recently made.
- Think of 3 ways your spouse has made you a better person – tell them now.
- Compliment your spouse on your favorite physical trait.
- Look at your spouse when they are unaware of your gaze – share your feelings.
- Share what you most admire about your spouse.
- Thank your spouse for helping you through a challenging time in your life.
- Dig out the wedding album and reminisce.
- Express confidence in your spouse's ability to overcome a problem.

- Listen to your spouse's worries - ask how you can help.
- Before parting, tell your spouse you can't wait to see him/her again.
- Tell your spouse about an interesting person you just met.

STEP 2: In the space provided below, write in your own Talk Charge ideas. Your Talk Charges will be much more successful if you plan for them.

I want to emphasize again that it doesn't matter if 99% of the Talk Charge ideas above don't apply to your situation or your spouse. Your focus should *not* be on what won't work. Try not to be negative. Use the above exercise as a means to discovering the subject matters that *will* connect you with your spouse.

Exercise 5.5
Talk Charge Prep II

I think you'll agree that having frequent 60-second *personal* conversations with your spouse will slowly but surely strengthen your marriage. However, knowing it will work and making it happen are completely different. We also know that 30-minutes of exercise every day will improve our health. But how many people exercise for 30-minutes every day?

The key to turning a good idea into an effective habit is *execution*. How do you make sure that this simple idea, Talk Charges, becomes an integral part of your day? Only you can answer that question.

What's your system for remembering something that's important but that you're vulnerable to forgetting? Are you a "list person?" Your Smartphone? Do you have a secretary who can remind you? Is there a strategic place you put sticky notes to remind you of important tasks?

Take the time *now* to think about and *implement* your personal reminder system so that Talk Charges are not just a good idea from Mort Fertel, but become an effective habit for *you*.

Follow the directions below until you finalize your reminder strategy.

STEP 1: List in the space provided below all the possibilities that *might* help you remember to phone your spouse regularly.

Spouse 1

Spouse 2

STEP 2: Review the possibilities above, select the best strategy for you, and record your decision here.

Spouse 1

Spouse 2

STEP 3: Implement your reminder system and make these Talk Charges happen!

Exercise 5.6
Touch Charge Prep

Below is a list of Touch Charge ideas. Once again, if you get a few ideas from this list that can work for you, the list will have served its purpose.

STEP 1: Comb through the list below and circle the Touch Charge ideas that might work for you.

Spouse 2: There is a duplicate list behind this one.

- Share dessert with one fork
- Surprise visit your spouse at their office or home and give them a kiss... and then leave.
- Play footsie next time you sit together
- Kiss your spouse upon waking
- Kiss your spouse before sleeping
- Caress your spouse's hand
- Touch your spouse's cheek or hand while driving
- Rub shoulders next time you sit next to each other
- Sit on your spouse's lap or sit them on yours
- Give your spouse a neck or shoulder massage
- What about dancing before dinner? No one's looking...
- Play with your spouse's hair while talking in bed
- Fall asleep holding hands
- Have a tickle "fight"
- Play Twister and let yourself laugh out loud
- Find a reason to touch your spouse when you are in the same room
- Hold hands under the table
- Brush your mate's hair out of his/her eyes
- Straighten his tie, being sure to touch him with love

- Button or zip her dress, being sure to touch her with love
- Knead the same dough together
- Kiss in the elevator when no one is looking
- Make your spouse's lunch for the day and deliver it with a kiss
- Turn off your spouse's alarm clock then wake them with a massage
- Kiss the back of your spouse's neck while he/she is reading
- An extra hug for no reason never hurt anyone
- "Spoon" your mate while sleeping

STEP 2: In the space provided below, write in your own Touch Charge ideas.

Spouse 2

STEP 1: Comb through the list below and circle the Touch Charge ideas that might work for you.

- Share dessert with one fork
- Surprise visit your spouse at their office or home and give them a kiss... and then leave.
- Play footsie next time you sit together
- Kiss your spouse upon waking
- Kiss your spouse before sleeping
- Caress your spouse's hand
- Touch your spouse's cheek or hand while driving
- Rub shoulders next time you sit next to each other
- Sit on your spouse's lap or sit them on yours
- Give your spouse a neck or shoulder massage
- What about dancing before dinner? No one's looking...
- Play with your spouse's hair while talking in bed
- Fall asleep holding hands
- Have a tickle "fight"
- Play Twister and let yourself laugh out loud
- Find a reason to touch your spouse when you are in the same room
- Hold hands under the table
- Brush your mate's hair out of his/her eyes
- Straighten his tie, being sure to touch him with love
- Button or zip her dress, being sure to touch her with love
- Knead the same dough together
- Kiss in the elevator when no one is looking
- Make your spouse's lunch for the day and deliver it with a kiss
- Turn off your spouse's alarm clock then wake them with a massage
- Kiss the back of your spouse's neck while he/she is reading

- An extra hug for no reason never hurt anyone
- “Spoon” your mate while sleeping

STEP 2: In the space provided below, write in your own Touch Charge ideas.

The Importance of Beginnings

Beginnings are important.

If a plane that takes-off from New York headed for Tokyo is off course by one degree, it will end up thousands of miles away from its destination.

Beginnings set the path for the rest of the journey. If you're off course even slightly *in the beginning*, you'll miss your target by a long-shot

If you hack off a branch from a tree, the tree suffers only slightly. But if you nick the seed of a tree, the tree will grow horribly disfigured.

What's the seed of your day with your spouse? It's those first few moments upon waking. And if you can begin every day with your spouse *connected*, you'll set a healthy path for the day.

Here's what I suggest: Try a Talk Charge and a Touch Charge the moment you wake up. As soon as you open your eyes, roll over, snuggle your spouse, and whisper "good morning" or some other sweet nothing.

I found (in my marriage and with spouses I've coached) that an early morning Talk Charge and Touch Charge is a powerful one-two combination that sets the tone for your relationship for the rest of the day.

If you and your spouse are not sleeping in the same bed, or if you're separated, try phoning first thing in the morning.

BONUS IDEA

Touch Charge/Talk Charge 1-2 Morning Combination

Exercise 5.7
Date Night—Making it Happen!

STEP 1: Consider the structure of a typical week in your home. Decide on which night will be date night and write it in the space provided:

Date Night: _____

STEP 2: Authorize the following Date Night contract.

Lone Ranger Track: Do *not* try to convince your spouse to sign this contract.

MARRIAGE FITNESS™ DATE NIGHT CONTRACT

I, the undersigned, on this ____ day of _____ 20__, hereby agree and commit that _____ night is Date Night.

I agree to “put love first” and hold this night as sacred time for our marriage.

I agree to not cancel Date Night except in the event of emergencies.

I agree that if I need to reschedule Date Night, I will notify my spouse far enough in advance to reschedule it for another night *that same week*.

I acknowledge that there will be times when I don't want to go on Date Night. I might be busy, angry with my spouse, or just feeling lazy. I hereby commit to go anyway.

I agree to the following 4 Date Night “rules”:

1. We will leave the house.

2. We will not go to a movie or any other form of entertainment that requires us to face in the same direction unless Date Night is long enough that we will also have 1 ½ hours facing each other.

3. We will not invite anyone else or go to anything social.

4. Date Night will last at least 1 ½ hours.

I hereby agree that this contract will be in full force and effect for the duration of our marriage.

Husband's Name _____

Husband's Signature _____

Wife's Name _____

Wife's Signature _____

STEP 3: List in the space provided Date Night ideas.

STEP 4: Begin Date Night this week.

Lone Ranger Track

Right now, the burden is on you. You need to spend an evening with your spouse each week in a way that is agreeable to them. Find your situation below:

- If your spouse will go out with you as long as you plan the evening, then plan the evening and go. Take full responsibility if necessary.
- If your spouse will go out with you only if you go to a ball game or some activity that was interesting to them, then take your spouse to that activity. Even if they're not interested in *you* right now, you can create time together by leveraging off what your spouse *is* interested in.
- If your spouse will only go out with you if another couple joins you, then invite that other couple.
- If your spouse would never agree to a planned evening, but would respond to you spontaneously picking them up at work, then "spontaneously" pick your spouse up at work and take them out.
- If there's no way to get your spouse out with you, then spend an evening at home doing something together. Even if that means sitting on the couch together watching the TV program they want to watch, do it.

Fake it 'till You Make It

At the end of every private session I give the person or couple I'm working with at least one assignment. The next time we talk, one of the first things I do is hold them accountable to that assignment. "Did you do what we discussed last time," I'll ask.

Sometimes the answer is, "No, it didn't feel right."

What should you do if you don't want to talk, touch, or date? What do you do if you simply don't feel like it?

Do it anyway!

The best way to change how you feel is to change what you do. If you wait until you feel like doing it, you'll be stuck forever.

You don't jog two miles or skip dessert because you feel healthy. You feel healthy because you jogged two miles and skipped dessert. So too, when it comes to your marriage, *your actions create your feelings!* Want to feel different? Act different.

If you were out of shape and the doctor told you to exercise 30 minutes each day, you wouldn't feel like doing that either.

Success takes discipline.

What's discipline?

Discipline is doing what you know you should do when you don't want to do it. This is so important I want to say it again. *Discipline is doing what you know you should do when you don't want to do it.*

Discipline is a uniquely human ability. Animals can only do what they feel like doing. We have choice. We can transcend ourselves, observe our desires, and choose to be the master of our desires rather a slave to them. This is an important character trait to develop if you want to succeed to transform your marriage because you are not going to want to do everything you need to do to get the job done.

And where will you get the motivation to be disciplined? From your marriage vision statement!

If you don't cultivate your vision, then all the reasons you don't want to do what you need to do will win; and you won't do it. But if you have a strong vision, a powerful dream, and you cultivate it in your heart and soul, you can beat the reasons that are pulling you down. Disciplined comes from being "disciplined" to a cause or a dream.

To transform your marriage, you will need the discipline day in and day out to make choices based on your *values* rather than your desires. This takes self awareness and clarity as to which values drive your behavior. Do you see the importance of your marriage vision statement?

Learning to love is no different (in some ways) than learning to play music.

Did you ever see sheet music? What is that mess?! Are you trying to tell me that's music?!

Even after you learn how to read the notes, it's still awkward to play and it certainly doesn't sound beautiful. In the beginning, most musicians don't *feel like* practicing. So why do they?

First, because they know what the notes could sound like. They've heard the music before and they have a dream that they'll be able to make that music one day.

Without a dream, all you have is the discomfort of the moment.

Second, is discipline—the ability to do what you don't want to do when you need to do it.

If musicians waited until they felt like practicing, they'd never become competent. But by employing discipline, a person can behave based on their values and subjugate their feelings. And if you keep practicing, eventually you begin to hear the music. But it takes time, patience, and practice.

It works the same way in your marriage. If your marriage is on the rocks, then you probably won't always feel like doing these habits. Reach to your vision, employ discipline, and do them anyway! Eventually you'll hear the music. It's the only way.

Establishing new habits is one of the hardest things to do in life.

Did you know that a rocket ship uses 95% of its fuel at lift off? After lift off, it takes relatively little energy to travel the rest of the journey through space.

Forming new habits in your relationship is like taking a rocket to the moon. It takes a lot of energy to get lift off. But once you get lift off, you'll travel great distances with relatively little energy.

If you felt like talking, touching, and dating, you wouldn't have this Marriage Fitness program. I know you don't want to do these things. So what else is new? Get over it. If you want to change your marriage, you'll have to "fake it 'till you make it."

What would you tell your child if they refused to brush their teeth every day? "Oh, okay honey, you don't want to? No problem. When you're ready, you know where the tooth paste is."

I don't think you would handle it that way. You would make them brush their teeth because it's good for them - even if they don't know or appreciate the importance of dental hygiene. But the wonderful thing about you is that you're a mature adult. And one of the unique characteristics of maturing is *self-control*. I'm not suggesting you should ignore your feelings. Acknowledge your feelings and then transcend them and do what you need to do.

Albert E. N. Gray devoted his life to studying the characteristics of a successful person. Toward the end of his life he made a speech called, "The Common Denominator of Success." In that speech he said, "The successful person has the habit of doing the things unsuccessful people don't like to do. They don't like doing them either, but they subordinate their disliking by the strength of the purpose."

<p>Exercise 5.8 Fake it 'till You Make It</p>
--

We all employ discipline in other areas of our life. Think about all the things you don't want to do, but you do them because you know you need to or because you know it's good for you. Do you always feel like exercising? Working? Brushing your teeth? I want you to really consider this. Why would you expect your marriage to be any different? What's the logic in doing for your marriage only what you want to do when you want to do it? Could you succeed in anything in life with that approach? Make a list in the space provided below of actions you take on a regular basis out of discipline rather than desire. I want you to notice that you can do what you don't want to do.

Exercise 5.9
Caution: Don't Fake This

I want to take you through an exercise that will clarify an important distinction.

Employing discipline so that you act based on your *values* rather than momentary *feelings* does *not* mean that you should *deny* your feelings. It's very important to acknowledge your feelings. You should accept them; and then transcend them.

Self-transcendence is a uniquely human quality. Animals do not have the ability to make choices based on values. They behave purely on instinct. But you are different. You can feel one way and yet *choose* to behave another. That, by the way, is what it really means to be *free*. Freedom is not the *right* to choose. That's *liberty*. A county can give you liberty. Freedom is the *ability* to make a choice. Freedom comes from within.

For example, a citizen of the United States has the *right* to vote. It's a liberty. But if a citizen is lazy on Election Day and doesn't vote, then they were a slave to their impulse and unable to choose freedom.

If you refer to Chapter 2 of *Marriage Fitness* and Phase 4 in this binder, you will notice that choice is made by the real *you*. Your *character* (using the term as I use in Chapter 2 of *Marriage Fitness*) is a slave—it takes direction. It takes direction either from the real *you* (your soul) or from external influences. If *you* control your character, then you are free. If you allow your character to be influenced by externalities, then you are enslaved.

Your goal is to be a free willing person able to make choices based on values rather than impulse, but simultaneously be able to acknowledge your feelings about that choice in a healthy way. Acknowledge and transcend—that's the ticket to succeeding with your mission without destroying your insides.

What are your feelings? Describe in the space provided below your honest feelings about the following relationship habits.

TALK CHARGES _____

TOUCH CHARGES _____

DATE NIGHT _____

BUSINESS MEETING _____

VISION STATEMENT _____

OTHER _____

Exercise 5.10
Business Meeting—Making it Happen!

STEP 1: Review a typical week in your home. Decide on the best time to have your weekly Business Meeting. Record your decision in the space provided below.

Duo Track: Discuss and decide *together*.

Lone Ranger Track: If your spouse is obstinate, then don't push to schedule your business meeting. Instead, keep a running agenda of issues you need to discuss with your spouse. When the time seems right, even if it's not a "business meeting" setting, go through your agenda. In other words, your spouse doesn't have to know that you're purposely refraining from discussing issues and creating an agenda for a once-a-week discussion.

Our Business Meeting is scheduled for:

Day of the Week: _____

Time: _____

STEP 2: In the space provided below, create an agenda for your first Business Meeting.

Duo Track: Create this agenda *together* now.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

Exercise 5.11

Adding “Put Love First” to Your Marriage Mission Statement

Your marriage mission statement is work in progress. It will be interesting for you to watch your marriage mission statement evolve as you go through this workbook.

Review and revise your marriage mission statement in the space provided below so that it includes the value “put love first.” Feel free to include details or examples of how the value will manifest in your marriage.

OUR MARRIAGE MISSION STATEMENT

Including “Put Love First”

YOUR RELATIONSHIP HOMEWORK

Phase 5

Talk Charge

Touch Charge

Date Night

Business Meeting

Romantic Retreat (plan it)

Photo Opp

Continue

Read Your Marriage Vision Statement Aloud Daily

Table Your Marital Problems & Issues

Take the Pressure Off Your Spouse

Continue YOUR Fixing

Personal Journal

Opportunity

Questions for Contemplation:

- How did it feel to contemplate your values and compare them with how you spend your time?
- Are you ready to put your spouse first? How do you feel about the prospect of your spouse putting you first?
- Are you worried about how you're going to fit everything in? How will you manage this lifestyle along with all your other responsibilities?
- In general, how are you feeling? What are you thinking? What's in your heart right now? What's on your mind?

Phase 6

IN-TO-ME-SEE

You have some changes you'd like to see in your spouse and your marriage, right? And if I were a betting man, I'd guess your spouse has some ideas too! So what are you waiting for? Are you waiting for your spouse to make the first move? Are you waiting to feel love?

Most people think that the *feeling* of love comes *before* we express love—and in the beginning of a relationship, that's what happens. You fall in love and *then* you do acts of love. Your feelings inspire your actions.

But mature love asks more of you. To create a strong *lasting* marriage, you first *choose loving actions*. Your feelings will follow.

After all, you don't jog two miles or skip dessert because you feel healthy. You feel healthy because you jogged two miles and skipped dessert. So too, when it comes to your marriage, *your actions create your feelings!*

Once upon a time, when you fell in love, it was easy to give to your spouse, and you probably enjoyed thinking up new ways to express how you felt through your giving. Remember surprising your spouse with something you knew they wanted? Remember the thoughtful trinket you got?

It's time to start giving again.

Now here's the key. You can't just give anything. Your spouse has to feel *you* in it. You see, the most important part of a present is that it embodies the presence of the one who gave it to you. This is not a matter of money. This takes time, thought, and energy.

What gift would tickle the soul of your spouse? What could you buy or make for your spouse that would show how much of *you* went into the gift? Don't just buy anything. Make sure it's your spouse's favorite color, made in their hometown, or something they mentioned last week.

This takes constant effort, but I guarantee that if you make a habit of this kind of giving it will transform your marriage.

What could you give your spouse that would make them glow and look at you with intense appreciation? Did they recently mention they wanted something? What's your spouse's favorite dessert? Favorite flower? Favorite spot for a romantic retreat? Favorite sports team (tickets to a game)? Favorite author (new book)? Favorite musician (CD or tickets)?

I spent 10 minutes in one of my marriage coaching sessions with a client exploring with him which one gift would "light up" his wife. We figured it out and, in retrospect; he believed that giving that gift was the turning point in their marriage.

Inside your spouse is a child that wants to be understood. If your spouse is like most people, they don't feel understood... even by you. When you get the right gift for your spouse, they will feel *understood*, and connected to you, the giver. When you give someone a gift that says, "I know you, I understand you," you can "melt" them.

It's easy to buy a gift. But the right gift, given at the right time and in the right way—that's an art. "Money can't buy you love." "It's the thought that counts."

In the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The only gift is a portion of thyself."

Exercise 6.1
Remember When

It's natural to give when you fall in love. Do you remember wanting to give to your spouse? What did you give them? Make a list of the gifts you gave and the other ways you showed your understanding for them. You can ask your spouse to help you remember what and how you gave.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

Spouse 2

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

<p>Exercise 6.2</p> <p>Seeing the Connection (Part I: People)</p>
--

STEP 1: Make a list in the left column of 3 people that you feel “connected” to and 3 people you do *not* feel connected to. You might list friends, relatives, or your children.

STEP 2: In the right column, rank on a scale of 1-10 the intensity and frequency with which you give to that person.

STEP 3: Notice the correlation in your life between your feelings for someone and your propensity for giving.

3 PEOPLE YOU'RE CONNECTED TO	RANK
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

3 PEOPLE YOU'RE NOT CONNECTED TO	RANK
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Spouse 2

3 PEOPLE YOU'RE CONNECTED TO	RANK
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

3 PEOPLE YOU'RE NOT CONNECTED TO	RANK
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

<p>Exercise 6.3</p> <p>Seeing the Connection (Part II: Things/Activities)</p>
--

STEP 1: Make a list in the left column of 3 activities or things that you feel “connected” to and 3 activities or things you do *not* feel connected to. You might list your car, work, a computer game, etc.

STEP 2: In the right column, rank on a scale of 1-10 the intensity and frequency with which you give to that thing or activity.

STEP 3: Notice the correlation in your life between your feelings for something and your propensity for giving.

3 THINGS/ACTIVITIES YOU'RE CONNECTED TO	RANK
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

3 THINGS/ACTIVITIES YOU'RE NOT CONNECTED TO	RANK
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Spouse 2

3 THINGS/ACTIVITIES YOU'RE CONNECTED TO	RANK
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

3 THINGS/ACTIVITIES YOU'RE NOT CONNECTED TO	RANK
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Exercise 6.4

Knowledge of Your Spouse Assessment

How well do you know your spouse? Go to your computer and log onto www.MortFertel.com/assessments, click on “knowledge of your spouse,” and take the electronic assessment. Record your score below.

Lone Ranger Track: If your spouse will not cooperate with you, then skip this assessment.

Name _____

Date _____

Assessment Score _____

Spouse 2

Name _____

Date _____

Assessment Score _____

Exercise 6.5
Intimacy Interview

This exercise is crucial! Review pages 112-116 in *Marriage Fitness* and use the guide on the following pages to help you conduct your Intimacy Interview. *Important:* The following pages are a guide. Do *not* restrict yourself to the listed topics and questions. You should go on tangents. You should ask and explore everything!

Lone Ranger Track

If your spouse is not willing to do an Intimacy Interview, you can still acquire the information you need to give to them in meaningful ways. Here are some strategies for you to employ:

1. **MARITAL ESPIONAGE.** Ask friends or family members. You'd be surprised how much everyone else knows about your spouse. Review the Intimacy Interview Guide and write next to each question the name of a family member or a friend who might know the answer. Then contact these people and try to acquire as much information as possible. Depending on your situation and your relationship with the person you're speaking to, you may want to ask casually or explain the purpose of our inquiry.
2. **BY THE WAY.** Instead of sitting down at one time for a dramatic "Intimacy Interview," ask your spouse a question or two casually each day in the midst of other conversation. Over time, if you ask questions regularly, you'll get the information you need.
3. **GET REPRESENTATION.** Ask a friend or family member to ask your spouse and begin accumulating information for you. Obviously, you will need their cooperation and confidence.
4. **PEEK & OBSERVE.** A lot of the information that could help you give the right things to your spouse is right there under your nose. Just look (without invading your spouse's privacy). For example, you can note your spouse's clothes size when you're folding the laundry.

INTIMACY INTERVIEW GUIDE

Pre-Interview Check List:

- Kids asleep
- Refreshments
- Computer or pen & pad
- TV off
- Candle burning
- Lights dimmed
- Background music (if you like)
- Cell phones off

Important Reminder: Use the below questions as a *guide!* They should lead to other questions and topics.

Duo Track: There is a second Intimacy Interview Guide behind this one.

Interview Questions:

1. VACATION.

a. Sun and fun? Sightseeing? Adventure? Exotic?

b. Luxury? Rustic/camping?

c. What do you like to do on vacation?

d. Where have you always dreamed of visiting?

e. 2 weeks or 2 days? How long do you like to go for?

f. Where would you like to go next?

g. Do we/you have the luggage we/you need?

h. Any airline you're scared to fly on?

i. When's a good time for you to travel in terms of your work schedule?
Holiday schedule? Family schedule?

j. Do you like to go away to celebrate or do you prefer to stay home?

k. Do you like to travel with the kids or without?

l. With friends or without friends?

2. DRESS AND FASHION

a. Favorite colors?

b. Colors you don't like?

c. Favorite designers/brand (Gap, Ann Taylor, Ralph Lauren, etc.)

d. How would you describe your "look?"

e. Favorite fabrics (wool, cotton, etc.)

f. Fabrics that you don't like or you find uncomfortable

g. Cowboy boots?

h. Baseball cap?

i. Sports jersey?

j. Jeans

k. Shoe size?

l. Pant size?

m. Shirt size?

n. Jacket size?

o. Blouse size?

p. Sweater size?

q. Suit size?

r. Belt size?

s. Lingerie size?

t. Undergarments size?

3. JEWELRY

a. Do you prefer gold, silver, or platinum?

b. Do you like to wear rings, bracelets, earrings, necklaces?

c. What are the different occasions you like to wear jewelry and how do your preferences change with the occasions?

d. Are you into body earrings? Toe rings? Waist bracelets?

e. Any particular jewelry designer you like?

f. Where do you like to shop for jewelry?

g. If I could save to buy you one piece of jewelry, what would you like it to be?

h. What one piece of jewelry would you like to have?

4. FOOD

a. List favorite foods. Favorite desserts.

b. Favorite restaurants?

c. How often would you like to go out to eat?

d. Would you like to cook together?

e. Do you like when I cook for you? Do you like to cook for me?

f. What's your favorite dish?

g. Favorite snack?

h. How do you like your coffee? How much milk? How many sugars?

i. How do you like your...?

j. What's the most refreshing drink for you when you're thirsty?

k. Favorite ice cream flavor?

l. Favorite drink?

m. Favorite candy?

n. Favorite wine? Beer? Liquor?

5. ENTERTAINMENT

a. What are your favorite sports to watch?

b. Who's your favorite team?

c. Who are your favorite players? What number jersey do they wear?

d. Favorite TV programs?

e. Who's your favorite actor?

f. Favorite musician?

g. Favorite band?

h. How often would you like to go to the movies?

i. How often would you like to rent a video?

j. What type of books do you like?

k. What's the next book you'd like to read?

l. Who's your favorite author?

m. Is there a magazine you'd like to read regularly that you don't have a subscription to?

n. Favorite type of music?

o. What CD don't you have that you'd like?

p. How often would you like to go to a live sporting event?

q. Who would you like to see perform?

r. Who would you like to see play?

s. Do you like to go to concerts? Who would you like to see perform?

t. Opera?

u. Dance?

v. Movies?

w. Sports?

x. Ballet?

y. Live theatre?

6. ACTIVITIES

a. Bowling?

b. Hunting?

c. Tennis?

d. Bike riding?

e. Jogging? Exercise?

f. Cards?

7. HOME

a. Do you care about how the house is decorated?

b. What do you like and not like?

c. Who's your favorite artist?

d. What's your taste in art?

e. What's your taste in house wares?

f. What one item in our house do you just hate?

g. What's your favorite house ware in our house?

h. What's missing from our house? What one house ware item would you like to see in our house and where would you put it?

i. Colors?

j. Antiques?

k. Finishes?

l. Garden?

m. Wall finishes?

n. Additions?

o. Do you like our house or would you like to move?

8. SEX

a. How often?

b. Favorite positions?

c. Favorite locations of the house?

d. Would you like to meet at a hotel occasionally?

e. What are your fantasies?

f. Sex toys?

g. Hang ups?

h. Things I should be sensitive to?

i. What one thing would you like me to do that I do not?

j. What one thing do I do that you would like me to stop doing?

k. Do you like to do it in the dark or with the lights on? Candle light?

l. Music? What kind?

m. Scents? What flavor?

n. What could improve our sex life?

9. OTHER & NOTES

INTIMACY INTERVIEW GUIDE (Spouse 2)

Pre-Interview Check List:

- Kids asleep
- Refreshments
- Computer or pen & pad
- TV off
- Candle burning
- Lights dimmed
- Background music (if you like)
- Cell phones off

Important Reminder: Use the below questions as a *guide!* They should lead to other questions and topics.

Duo Track: There is a second Intimacy Interview Guide behind this one.

Interview Questions:

10. VACATION.

a. Sun and fun? Sightseeing? Adventure? Exotic?

b. Luxury? Rustic/camping?

c. What do you like to do on vacation?

d. Where have you always dreamed of visiting?

e. 2 weeks or 2 days? How long do you like to go for?

f. Where would you like to go next?

g. Do we/you have the luggage we/you need?

h. Any airline you're scared to fly on?

i. When's a good time for you to travel in terms of your work schedule?
Holiday schedule? Family schedule?

j. Do you like to go away to celebrate or do you prefer to stay home?

k. Do you like to travel with the kids or without?

l. With friends or without friends?

11. DRESS AND FASHION

a. Favorite colors?

b. Colors you don't like?

c. Favorite designers/brand (Gap, Ann Taylor, Ralph Lauren, etc.)

d. How would you describe your "look?"

e. Favorite fabrics (wool, cotton, etc.)

f. Fabrics that you don't like or you find uncomfortable

g. Cowboy boots?

h. Baseball cap?

i. Sports jersey?

j. Jeans

k. Shoe size?

l. Pant size?

m. Shirt size?

n. Jacket size?

o. Blouse size?

p. Sweater size?

q. Suit size?

r. Belt size?

s. Lingerie size?

t. Undergarments size?

12. JEWELRY

a. Do you prefer gold, silver, or platinum?

b. Do you like to wear rings, bracelets, earrings, necklaces?

c. What are the different occasions you like to wear jewelry and how do your preferences change with the occasions?

d. Are you into body earrings? Toe rings? Waist bracelets?

e. Any particular jewelry designer you like?

f. Where do you like to shop for jewelry?

g. If I could save to buy you one piece of jewelry, what would you like it to be?

h. What one piece of jewelry would you like to have?

13. FOOD

a. List favorite foods. Favorite desserts.

b. Favorite restaurants?

c. How often would you like to go out to eat?

d. Would you like to cook together?

e. Do you like when I cook for you? Do you like to cook for me?

f. What's your favorite dish?

g. Favorite snack?

h. How do you like your coffee? How much milk? How many sugars?

i. How do you like your...?

j. What's the most refreshing drink for you when you're thirsty?

k. Favorite ice cream flavor?

l. Favorite drink?

m. Favorite candy?

n. Favorite wine? Beer? Liquor?

14. ENTERTAINMENT

a. What are your favorite sports to watch?

b. Who's your favorite team?

c. Who are your favorite players? What number jersey do they wear?

d. Favorite TV programs?

e. Who's your favorite actor?

f. Favorite musician?

g. Favorite band?

h. How often would you like to go to the movies?

i. How often would you like to rent a video?

j. What type of books do you like?

k. What's the next book you'd like to read?

l. Who's your favorite author?

m. Is there a magazine you'd like to read regularly that you don't have a subscription to?

n. Favorite type of music?

o. What CD don't you have that you'd like?

p. How often would you like to go to a live sporting event?

q. Who would you like to see perform?

r. Who would you like to see play?

s. Do you like to go to concerts? Who would you like to see perform?

t. Opera?

u. Dance?

v. Movies?

w. Sports?

x. Ballet?

y. Live theatre?

15. ACTIVITIES

a. Bowling?

b. Hunting?

c. Tennis?

d. Bike riding?

e. Jogging? Exercise?

f. Cards?

16. HOME

a. Do you care about how the house is decorated?

b. What do you like and not like?

c. Who's your favorite artist?

d. What's your taste in art?

e. What's your taste in house wares?

f. What one item in our house do you just hate?

g. What's your favorite house ware in our house?

h. What's missing from our house? What one house ware item would you like to see in our house and where would you put it?

i. Colors?

j. Antiques?

k. Finishes?

l. Garden?

m. Wall finishes?

n. Additions?

o. Do you like our house or would you like to move?

17. SEX

a. How often?

b. Favorite positions?

c. Favorite locations of the house?

d. Would you like to meet at a hotel occasionally?

e. What are your fantasies?

f. Sex toys?

g. Hang ups?

h. Things I should be sensitive to?

i. What one thing would you like me to do that I do not?

j. What one thing do I do that you would like me to stop doing?

Exercise 6.7
Giving Assessment

What are your giving patterns? Go to your computer and log onto www.MortFertel.com/assessments, click on "giving patterns," and take the electronic assessment. Record your score below.

Name _____

Date _____

Assessment Score _____

Spouse 2

Name _____

Date _____

Assessment Score _____

YOUR RELATIONSHIP HOMEWORK

Phase 6

Give Daily to your Spouse

Continue
Talk Charge
Touch Charge
Date Night
Business Meeting
Read Your Marriage Vision Statement Aloud Daily
Table Your Marital Problems & Issues
Take the Pressure Off Your Spouse
Continue YOUR Fixing

Personal Journal

Opportunity

Questions for Contemplation:

- What is intimacy for you?
- Do you feel known by your spouse?
- What did you realize about how well (or not well) you knew your spouse?
- In general, how are you feeling? What are you thinking? What's in your heart right now? What's on your mind?

Phase 7

CONNECTING WITH YOUR SPOUSE

I am the proud father of 5 children including triplets. After the triplets were born, the doctor cautioned my wife. He told her that if she plans to breast feed she needs to make sure she gets enough calcium in her diet.

I remember thinking, “Good point. Will 3 babies get enough calcium from one mother?”

But the doctor wasn’t concerned about the babies. He was concerned about my wife.

When mothers nurse, it’s important they get enough calcium in their diet. It’s not important for the baby; it’s important for the mother. The baby will get enough calcium regardless. The question is whether it comes from the mother’s diet or from her teeth. Either way, a baby will take it. Because babies only know “me.”

Most of us grow up to be big babies. Even after nursing, we get another 20 or 30 years practice taking care of “me.” So when we get married, it’s not surprising that we’re thinking mostly, even if it’s subconsciously, about how to get “my” needs met.

In fact, most marriages are a dance for compatibility—a subtle negotiation by both spouses to live the life they (individually) want to lead. And many couples are quite good at coordinating compatible lives. He’s got his schedule and interests...she’s got her schedule and interests—they sleep under one roof—but they lead separate lives.

You can achieve compatibility like this. You can live parallel lives that might not interfere with each other. But you’ll be lonely and have a poor marriage.

To really connect, your lives have to intersect.

Tying the Knot

Think about when you fell in love. Remember how you were involved with each others lives? You talked about each others interests, looked at each others photo albums, became friends with each others friends, met each others family, visited each other at work, helped each other with projects, solved each others problems, and asked for each others opinions. Your lives intertwined—you moved from “me” to “we”—and *that’s* why you fell in love.

Every aspect of your life is an opportunity to connect with your spouse. Every friend, problem, project, hope, dream, fear, hobby, diet, decision, and joke is an opportunity to “move from me to we.” And how much of your lives you share and how you share them determines the depth of your connection...the health and strength of your marriage.

Jon and Tiffany, a couple I coached in private sessions, were trying desperately to restore their marriage. One of their challenges was Tiffany’s independence. She was very focused on what *she* wanted to do, when *she* wanted to do it, and how *she* wanted to do it. She had a vision of *her* life and she wanted Jon to be a part of that vision.

Of course, Tiffany wasn’t satisfied even when she did do what she wanted because she was miserable in her marriage. Her lifestyle was fulfilling *her* needs, but disconnecting her from Jon. Ultimately, she was unfulfilled.

Here’s an example of the core of their problem. Tiffany is a jogger and very committed to her exercise routine. Jon feels that her exercise routine takes a lot of time away from them as a couple. He also feels disconnected from an important aspect of her life.

In an effort to improve both situations, Jon bought a pair of jogging sneakers and decided to try to share in this part of Tiffany's life. This was an excellent effort on his part.

Both Jon and Tiffany were excited about their first run together. But Jon was out of breath after running one block. Tiffany could have, and should have, stayed with him and continued the "we" experience. But in her mind Jon was interfering with her routine so she left him in the dust and called to him, "I'll meet you home."

Tiffany running away from Jon was symbolic of the separation that occurs when a spouse's energy is devoted to a "me" life rather than a "we" life.

Tiffany's attitude is very common amongst unhappy couples. The attitude is that if my spouse doesn't interfere with *my* lifestyle, then we'll succeed to be *compatible*. Otherwise, we must not be right for each other.

But that's not a marriage. That's a business deal.

Compatibility does *not* make for a successful marriage.

Marriage is about crafting a unified life.

What About Independence?

Moving from "me" to "we" is a correct principle for marriage success, but it's a counter-culture message. Society encourages us to be independent and self sufficient. I have heard about counselors who recommend that if you can't fulfill *your* lifestyle desires, then you shouldn't be married.

But a successful marriage is not when 2 people succeed to live parallel lives; it's when 2 people succeed to merge into one life.

It's important to understand the history of marriage as it relates to this point.

In previous generations, husbands and wives were *dependent* upon each other in an unhealthy way. Generally, woman depended on their husbands for financial security and even self esteem because they didn't have their own mission outside the home. And men depended on their wives to run the home and care for the children. (I admit that the above statements are generalizations, which, by definition, means that they are *generally* true. Of course, there were exceptions.)

Many women were trapped in miserable marriages they couldn't get out of because they had no financial freedom or self-confidence. Other women were abandoned by their husbands and suffered for the rest of their life.

Men may have had more control, but they were equally unfulfilled.

The reaction to this era was for women (and men too) to become more *independent*. People today have separate careers, friends, and bank accounts. Most people succeeded to achieve independence to such an extent that they no longer *need* (as a practical matter) their spouse.

Women have learned to be financially self sufficient and men have learned to be better caretakers.

Can you see how independence plants the seeds for loneliness and divorce?

I want to be clear about my point. The fact that women and men have become more independent is good! It's good that women are more educated, professional trained, and participants in the workforce. And it's good that men learned to be better caretakers. Independence is *better* than being dependent. But it's not the highest level of maturity.

Deep marital fulfillment does not come from being independent; it comes from being *interdependent*.

Interdependence is when people *choose* to need each other. They decide, based on their will not on their weakness, to merge their lives. They *choose* to create a unified life out of recognition that it is *better* than a life lived independently. An *interdependent* couple does not need each other; they *want* each other. They understand that "we" is better than "me."

Reality and Interdependence.

Everything is interdependent.

Consider the biological reality of the universe. An atom is part of a molecule. A molecule is part of a cell. A cell is part of an organism. And so on. From a biological perspective, everything has an element of independence (it's important to achieve that level), but everything is also part of something else (interdependence).

Consider language. There are letters (A-Z). And letters make up words. The words make up sentences. The sentences make up paragraphs. The paragraphs make up... Every component of language has independent meaning *and* is interdependent.

Imagine if the word "bark" wanted to be independent. Imagine it didn't want to be a part of a sentence, a paragraph, a chapter, a book, or a library. The life of "bark" would have little meaning. The only place "bark" could exist is in a dictionary. Its life would have limited value. And it might experience an identity crisis. Is it that which a dog does or that which you find on a tree?

The meaning of "bark" *depends* on its context. And so does ours.

Everything is interdependent. It's the natural composition of the universe. However, the unique situation for human beings is that we must *choose* interdependence. It's not automatic for us. We could choose to be independent and cut ourselves off from a greater context. But, like the word "bark," that would diminish the value of our life and lead to an identity crisis.

We all yearn to be part of something beyond ourselves. We know in the depths of our being that we are part of a greater context. Many people seek this experience at sporting events, rock concerts, or in religion. We like to feel connected to people and to a cause outside ourselves. But a sporting event or a rock concert is a temporary high. The question is: how do you live with that connection?

The answer is marriage. Your spouse is your first connection. It's the first level of self transcendence.

To try to be independent is like swimming upstream. You'll be out of sync. It's simply not the way the universe is designed.

We are lost outside the context of our marriage. It's by merging our life with our spouse's life to form a new life on a higher level that we find our meaning and give our independence interdependent significance.

When two plants are next to each other, their roots will commingle and make the soil beneath them richer. They don't compete for the nutrients of the soil; they enrich it! There's no compromise; there's *synergy*!

When two pieces of wood are on top of one another, they hold *more than twice* the weight that either of them can hold alone. One plus one equals three!

One day a small boy tried to lift a heavy stone, but couldn't budge it. His father, watching, finally said, "are you sure you're using all your strength?"

"Yes, I am!" the boy cried.

"No, you're not," said the father. "You haven't asked me to help you."

How to be Happy

If you could just be happy, right? But how do you get there? The path from a troubled marriage to personal happiness is not so simple, is it?

I was doing a phone session just the other day when Jack said to me, "I've got to get out of this marriage. I've got to find happiness for *me*."

In fact, it's quite common for people in an unhappy marriage to think that happiness is just on the other side of divorce. Somehow it became their spouse's fault that they're unhappy. It's ironic. When we're single, we'll be happy when we meet someone. Once we're married, we think we'll be happy when we're single.

But you know deep down that you can't be happy alone. Your life is meant to be part of another life.

If you focus on *your* happiness; happiness will elude you. But if you focus on your marriage, you'll find happiness for *yourself*. In other words, being happy is *not* the

result of *you* trying to be happy. It's the *consequence* of you creating a successful marriage with your spouse.

Pursuing happiness is like a boomerang; if it comes back to *you*, then you've missed the target.

It's like good sex. Research shows that the more you focus on having good sex, the more good sex eludes you. The key to good sex is good physical conditioning and a deep *emotional* connection. In other words, good sex is not something you pursue; it's something that ensues.

It's the same with your happiness. It's not something you pursue; it's something that ensues from efforts that transcend yourself.

The hardest time to focus on your marriage is when you're frustrated with your spouse. I know that. I know you'd rather turn inward. But if you do, you'll narrow your existence. You'll close yourself in. You'll shield your pain (to some extent), but you'll also turn your back on your only hope.

Exercise 7.1
The Unexpected

“Leah” always appears. In marriage, there are always surprises. Make a list in the space provided below of the problematic things about your spouse you did not expect.

<u>Character Traits</u>	<u>Time Consuming Interests</u>	<u>Other Issues/Problems</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

SPOUSE 2

<u>Character Traits</u>	<u>Time Consuming Interests</u>	<u>Other Issues/Problems</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Exercise 7.2
Move Your Circle of Life

One way to “move from me to we” is to take interest in your spouse’s interests. In addition to your spouse feeling good about the attention you’ll give them, your involvement in their hobby or activity connects you to each other.

STEP 1: Review pages 133-136 in *Marriage Fitness* (the section subtitled “Move Your Circle of Life”).

STEP 2: Turn back to the list you compiled in Exercise 7.1 and review the column labeled “Time Consuming Interests.”

STEP 3: Select one of your spouse’s interests that offers you the best and most realistic opportunity to get involved.

Choose an interest that is important to your spouse. The more important it is to your spouse, the greater the impact your involvement will have on your marriage. If your spouse jogs one hour every day, that’s a better choice than science fiction if your spouse reads only one science fiction book each year.

The purpose for you to get involved with one of your spouse’s interests is to increase “we” in your marriage. Don’t choose an interest that is already part of your “we.” Choose something that is interfering with your marriage. Choose something that will impact your marriage when you get involved.

Consider *your* interest in the topic when you make your selection. Your spouse’s passion for the interest is more important, but if you’re trying to decide between two interests that are of equal importance to your spouse, choose the one that interests you more. The more interest you have in the topic, the easier it will be for you to get involved.

STEP 3: Record your decision in the space provided below.

SPOUSE 2

STEP 4: Get involved in the activity you chose at least once per week.

Exercise 7.3
Pick a Hobby—Any Hobby
(Duo Track Only)

A couple that “plays” together stays together.

I’m sure you have your separate interests and that those interests fulfill you *personally*. But hobbies you do *together* create an opportunity for you to connect with each other. Let’s find a hobby you can share.

STEP 1: Review pages 136-137 in *Marriage Fitness* (the section subtitled “Pick a Hobby—Any Hobby”).

STEP 2: Talk with your spouse about a new hobby that you can do together. Make a list of possibilities in the space provided below. Don’t skip this step and try to decide on a hobby to share yet. Just brainstorm together and make a list without committing to a decision.

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

STEP 3: Discuss the possibilities on your list, narrow down your choices, and select *one* hobby that you’ll *both* enjoy doing together.

STEP 4: Plan to “play” *together* at least once per week.

Exercise 7.4

Adding "Move from ME to WE" to Your Marriage Mission Statement

Your marriage mission statement is work in progress. It will be interesting for you to watch your marriage vision statement evolve as you go through your workbook.

Review and revise your marriage mission statement in the space provided below so that it includes the value "Move from ME to WE." Feel free to include details or examples of how the value will manifest in your marriage.

OUR MARRIAGE MISSION STATEMENT

Including "Put Love First," "Give Presence," and "Move from ME to WE"

Exercise 7.5
Make Room for Love

If you're like most people, you have an interest or hobby that takes you away from your spouse and interferes with the potential of your marriage. Is it a computer game? A TV show? Sports? A card game? Excessive talking on the telephone?

STEP 1: Review pages 137-139 of *Marriage Fitness* (the section subtitled "Make Room for Love").

STEP 2: Make a list in the space provided below of the interests or hobbies that interfere with or negatively impact your marriage.

Spouse 2

STEP 3: Select one of your interests or hobbies from your list that you're willing to stop or curtail. Record your choice in the space provided below and indicate whether you will stop or curtail the activity.

SPOUSE 2

<input type="checkbox"/> Stop <input type="checkbox"/> Curtail (Detail _____)	<input type="checkbox"/> Stop <input type="checkbox"/> Curtail (Detail _____)

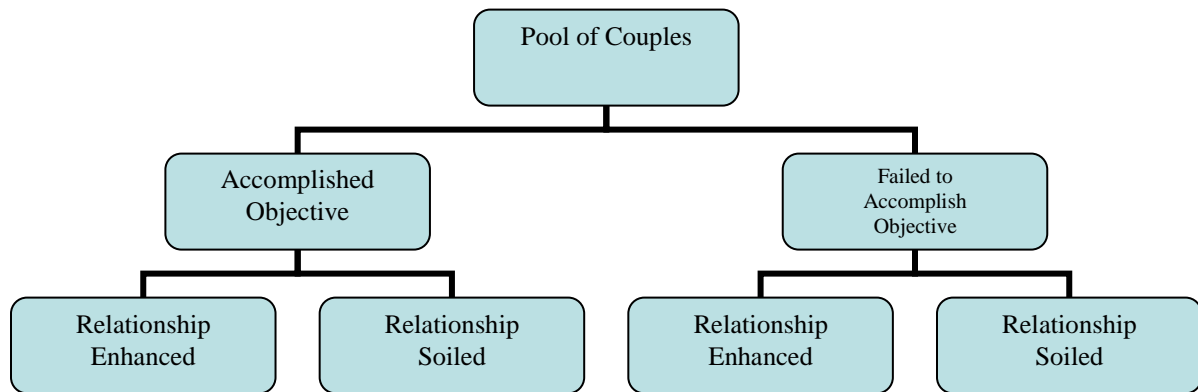
STEP 4: Be a person of integrity and follow through with your commitment.

Exercise 7.6
Be a Team

STEP 1: Get a piece of string about 2 feet long. Working as a team with your spouse (or a partner if your spouse is not available), tie the string in a knot, a bow, a double bow, and then tie it to the leg of a chair. Now there's one catch. Are you ready? Each of you may only use your non-dominant hand (so if you're right handed, you can only use your left hand). Work on this together for at least 10 minutes or until you complete all the tasks before you read on.

STEP 2: Read the below explanation.

Couples that try to "tie the knot" fall into 2 broad categories and 2 sub categories. The breakdown looks like this.



In other words, whether couples succeed to solve the problem or not (no pun intended), has nothing to do with the quality of their relationship. Some couples solved the problem, but "killed each other" in the process. Other couples fumbled through the process, but had fun with each other doing it. Success or failure with the knot is NOT what determines success or failure in the relationship.

Much to everyone's surprise, the goal of "tying the knot" is not to tie the knot, but it's to work together and enhance your marriage. And so it is in real life.

Sometimes the couple who seems to be "winning" on the outside, is really losing on the inside. And the couple who seems to be failing on the outside, is really succeeding to connect with each on the inside. Solving your problems is not the goal; it's the means through which you have the opportunity to achieve the real goal—connecting with your spouse!

And in fact, research shows that the quality of your marriage is not dependent upon the number of your problems, the magnitude of them, or your ability to solve them. The quality of your marriage is dependent upon the extent to which you join together and work as a team to solve whatever problems you have.

In other words, the problems in your marriage are not the problem. The problem is the way you and your spouse address the problems. If you work on your problems together, the problems may or may not be resolved, but your marriage will be enhanced. If you're not united in your effort to solve them, then regardless of whether or not they get resolved, your marriage will most likely deteriorate because of them.

The secret, once again, is to “move from me to we.”

Here’s a story worth remembering.

A husband takes his wife to the doctor to have her leg examined. So the doctor says to them, “What’s wrong?” The husband responds, “My wife’s leg. It hurts *us*.”

Now that’s a team. That’s moving from me to we. And that’s where you want to try to get to. You want to feel the pain and struggle of your spouse’s problems and issues as if they are your own. You want to join your spouse and be on their team fighting united against the problems rather than the problems being between you and you and your spouse being opponents.

The key to succeeding in marriage is to live with our spouse’s problems like they’re our own. In marriage—in “we”—our spouse’s problems *are* our own.

Let’s say your spouse is controlling, possessive, absent minded, neurotic, overly sensitive, obsessed with computer games, a workaholic, an alcoholic, a sex addict, a drug addict, lazy, spaced out, or whatever. Most people’s attitude is, “my spouse has a problem and it’s interfering with our relationship.” But the real problem is that attitude and not the problem itself.

People say “love is blind”? True love is not blind. True love is seeing and still loving. True love is unconditional.

So many people give-up on their spouse when they discover their flaws or problems. But everyone has problems. Remember when you fell in love and discovered each other’s problems? Remember how you got involved? You helped each other and asked each other to not shut the other out. That’s the ticket!

Love is like a hug. You can’t hug a piece of your spouse. “Hey, can I just hug your right arm?” No. You have to open your arms and let in the whole person. And you know how you know when it’s a good hug? When there’s no space between you—when you’re completely connected. And a complete connection includes connecting with each other’s problems and issues.

Now don’t get me wrong, I don’t expect you to get excited about your spouse’s problems. “Hey, my spouse has a compulsive neurotic disorder and I love the fact that I have to take inventory of the toilet paper.”

“Hey, I can top that one. My spouse is up at 3am every night eating more than you can eat in an entire day.”

I know you don’t like your spouse’s problems. I’m sure you don’t like your own. That’s the point. It doesn’t matter whose problem it is. In fact, soul mates know whose problem it is. Whose problem is it? That’s right. It’s “our” problem. And the question is—how are weeeee going to solve it. We’re together, united, and all our problems - whether they stem from me or from my wife - are over there. It’s us against them—my spouse and I against our problems. Wow. This is powerful. Because you realize that if you can do this, you can transform the very issues that divide you...the ones you fight about...into issues that unite you.

Let’s tie this into an important point from Phase 1. While accepting your spouse’s problems into your heart as if they are yours rather than treating them like something that’s wedged between you is marriage transforming, you must be careful not to insert yourself onto your spouse in your effort to help your spouse with their problem. You can and should accept your spouse’s problems as if they are yours, but you can’t help solve them until your spouse invites you to do so.

And how do you inspire your spouse to invite you to help them solve their problems? You evaluate your life and invite your spouse to join you in solving one of *your* problems. When they experience how your invitation into your life enhanced your marriage and transformed your problem into a marriage-blessing rather than a marriage-curse, then they will begin to consider extending the same invitation to you.

Once again, “you must be the change you wish to see.” And it’ll take patience! If you look for instant reciprocation, you’ll be disappointed. You must be focused on your work and stay the course.

Now you might be thinking, “What!” “My spouse doesn’t know the first thing about my problem. He couldn’t begin to help me resolve it. I’m having terrible problems in my business, but my spouse can’t even balance a check book. I haven’t been the same since my mother died, but my spouse doesn’t know how to deal with issues like this.

It doesn’t matter. The point of this exercise is not to solve your problem, although I hope you do. The point is to transform your problem from one that’s divides you into one that unites you. To move it from a me experience to a we experience. And to do that... you don’t have to solve the problem; you just have to attack it together.

I’ll tell you a secret. In a marriage, problems are not a problem. They’re neutral. They can either destroy love or create love. It’s up to you. It depends on how you and your spouse handle them. If you’re on the same team, you can live with anything. If you’re not, the slightest problem will drive you nuts. So be a team. Connect to all of your spouse. Move from me to we.

STEP 3: Make a list of *your* problems and flaws.

	<u>Spouse 2</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

STEP 3: Circle the one your spouse accepts the least. Place a check-mark next to the one your spouse criticizes or attacks you for the most. You may circle and check-mark the same one.

STEP 4: Choose the one you circled or the one you check-marked and invite your spouse to help you solve your problem as explained in pages 143-145 of *Marriage Fitness*.

Exercise 7.7
Decision Making Assessment

Do you include your spouse in your decisions or do you take control? Go to your computer and log onto www.MortFertel.com/assessments, click on “Decision Making,” and take the electronic assessment. Record your score below.

Name _____

Date _____

Assessment Score _____

Spouse 2

Name _____

Date _____

Assessment Score _____

Exercise 7.8
What Do You Think?

Decision making is another opportunity to connect with your spouse.

STEP 1: Review pages 149-150 in *Marriage Fitness* (the section subtitled “What Do You Think?”)

STEP 2: Make a list in the space provided below of decisions you make frequently. For example, you might list investments, family meal planning, work related decisions, entertainment choices, vacations, social plans, etc.

Spouse 2

<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
---	---

STEP 3: Circle one decision type you’d be willing to consult your spouse about on a regular basis.

STEP 4: Solicit your spouse’s opinion *regularly* before making your decisions about the matter you selected.

YOUR RELATIONSHIP HOMEWORK

Phase 7

Get Involved with One of Your Spouse's Hobbies
(Move Your Circle of Life)

Duo Track Only: Take-Up a Hobby Together
(Pick a Hobby—Any Hobby)

Stop or Curtail One Interfering Interest
(Make Room for Love)

Invite Your Spouse to Help Solve One of YOUR Problems
(Be a Team)

Solicit Your Spouse's Advice Before Making Decisions
(What Do You Think?)

Continue

Give Daily to your Spouse

Talk Charge

Touch Charge

Date Night

Business Meeting

Read Your Marriage Vision Statement Aloud Daily

Table Your Marital Problems & Issues

Take the Pressure Off Your Spouse

Continue YOUR Fixing

Personal Journal

Opportunity

Questions for Contemplation:

- What are your feelings about *interdependence*? Do you feel threatened by it? Do you think your spouse feels (or would feel) threatened by it?
- In general, how are you feeling? What are you thinking? What's in your heart right now? What's on your mind?

Phase 8

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR MARRIAGE

When Chrissy Redden set her sights on an Olympic gold medal, she gave up a promising senior management position in the food industry to train full-time. As she trained to qualify for the 2000 Olympics, a fan questioned the Canadian mountain biker's sacrifice. "Why do so many Olympic athletes sacrifice their careers, education, and future livelihoods for a chance at the gold?" he asked. "I just can't imagine giving up all that!"

It's a good question, isn't it? Why do athletes sacrifice, endure pain, push their bodies beyond their limits, and pass up other opportunities? The answer: they want to! And why do they want to? Because it's worth it!

Physical fitness isn't just about adding elements that improve your health, like exercise and more fruits and vegetables. It's also about *subtracting* elements that are *not* compatible with your goal. Could you really call yourself "healthy" if you exercised faithfully but continued to smoke or eat at fast food restaurants?

Your marriage is like physical fitness...if you want to be successful, you have to *stop* certain activities that are unhealthy for your relationship.

Renewing your marriage is like training for a gold medal—it takes 2 kinds of commitment. It takes commitment to do some things *and* a commitment to *avoid* doing others.

At this point in the program, you've learned about what *to do* for your marriage. As you probably realized, this phase of your workbook explains what you need to *refrain* from doing.

Is your spouse troubled by an emotional connection you have with someone else? Is your spouse uncomfortable with physical contact you have with your opposite-sex friends? Does your spouse feel that you give more attention to the TV than you do him/her?

Is your intimacy (physical or emotional) with someone else interfering with the potential intimacy you could have with your spouse?

Is your spouse uncomfortable with the intensity of your relationship with your mother, father, brother, sister, or aunt? Do you spend too much time and energy on work, the computer, a hobby, or with a particular person?

If you answered "no" to the questions in the above paragraphs, think deeper. Are you sure the answers are "no"? Do yourself a favor; ask your spouse those same questions! I bet you'll be surprised by the answers.

In the public seminars I do with couples, I ask people to raise their hand if they know of something they could refrain from doing that would improve their marriage. Usually, very few hands go up. I then ask people to raise their hand if they know of something *their spouse* does that if they refrained from doing would make a big difference in their marriage. Usually, almost every hand goes up.

Tami came to me for marriage coaching because she was uncomfortable with the relationship that her husband, Andy, had with one of his work colleagues. She was convinced that it wasn't sexual, but the way they giggled together and sometimes touched felt invasive to her.

I asked Tami if she ever discussed this with Andy. She said, "No, because I know what he'll say."

"What will he say?" I asked.

"He'll say that I'm crazy and that there's nothing going on between them," Tami responded. "But what is going on between them is *something* even though it's not sexual."

I asked Tami to have the discussion with Andy anyway. And Tami was right. It went *exactly* as she predicted.

So I asked to have an appointment with Andy. He agreed.

I talked privately with Andy about his relationship with this woman. Tami was right. It was not sexual. They were just friends.

I asked Andy what he enjoyed most about his relationship with his work colleague. Predictably, he said, "We have fun. When we're together, we laugh."

"Do you like to laugh?" I asked.

"Yes, I need the release occasionally. Things at home and work are so serious." Andy replied.

"Do you ever play and giggle with Tami," I asked.

"No, we're not like that together," Andy said.

"But it sounds like you need that in your life," I said.

"I do. But I don't get it at home," Andy said.

"Andy, you don't get it at home because you don't need it by the time you get home. Your friend at work is fulfilling you in this regard. And your wife feels violated. You're being emotionally unfaithful!" I explained.

"How would you like to connect and giggle with Tami like you connect and giggle with your friend?" I asked.

"I would love it," Andy said. "But it doesn't happen with Tami."

"It doesn't happen with Tami because you don't need it to happen with her. Create the need and you'll make it happen," I suggested.

In this case, I convinced Andy to tone down his relationship at work and create the need for laughter in his life to be fulfilled mostly by his wife. It worked and this one adjustment transformed their marriage.

By the way, I heard from Andy that the other woman's marriage was also transformed. She also was getting a need fulfilled from Andy that was robbing her and her husband of an opportunity to connect.

Here's an email I got from a reader. Listen closely to him. Notice what he's upset about and also notice what he doesn't even mention.

"Mort, I never received the first four parts. Would you please send them? Part five is exactly the things that are wrong in my marriage and I have mentioned it to my wife many times. She tells me about how about she and he friends, all guys, at work have so much fun at work. Why can't you do that with me? She said, "Because you're my husband. We talk about different things than you and I would." And the excessive touching is her too. She touches men she's just met as if she's known them her whole life. I find it very annoying. She doesn't touch me when we talk, but it seems she can't seem to keep her hands off other men's arms when they talk and she's a big flirt too. Always laughing and leaning towards them and touching them on their arms, shoulders, and chest. Men think she's coming on to them. I think so too. I mentioned that to her too, but she says, "You are insecure. If you weren't so insecure, it wouldn't bother you," But it does bother me. I think at this point I am insecure, but because of how she has treated and continues to treat me compared to other men, not because I am insecure already and I am intimidated by her actions and men's responses. I can only imagine what she

like when I'm not around. Well, anyway, when I read this letter, I almost cried. It's me.
John.

I once coached a man who hired a private investigator to spy on his wife. After a few weeks, the PI reported back and said, "I've got good news." And he went on to show his client photos of his wife playing, laughing, joking, and picnicking with another man.

The husband, pained at the sight of his wife having so much fun with another man, asked, "What's the good news?"

The PI responded, "I followed your wife and this man for 3 weeks. They never went to a hotel or his place. And I never saw them kiss or touch in a sexual way. They're just friends."

The husband asked again, "Ya, so what's the *good* news?"

Friends can ruin a marriage too. You don't have to have sex to be unfaithful. Emotional infidelity can ruin your relationship.

The commitment to sleep with one person only guarantees you monogamy. The commitment to be with one person is what you need to create a healthy marriage.

Refraining from any of the following might improve your marriage:

- a friendship that your spouse feels is emotionally unfaithful
- flirting
- TV watching
- computer game playing
- a hobby or interest
- excessive work hours
- excessively friendly touching, hugging, or kissing of friends

Refraining from certain behaviors can be challenging. As difficult as it is to begin a new discipline, it's usually more difficult to break old habits.

Chrissy Redden was able to refrain when she contemplated her future. The decision to give up her career was difficult, she admitted, but said, "I imagined myself older and talking to my grandchildren. Which would I regret more—giving up my job or giving up a chance at a gold medal?"

What about you? Which would you regret more: refraining from behaviors that interfere with your ability to connect to your spouse or giving up the chance to have a lasting healthy marriage?

After achieving her Olympic dream and taking eighth place in the 2000 Sydney Olympics, Redden says she's never regretted her decision, even with the sacrifice involved. Neither will you.

<p>Exercise 8.1</p> <p>Sources of Emotional Infidelity</p>

The chances are good that you *already* employ many of the relationship habits you've learned so far...but with someone other than your spouse! Let's explore this.

STEP 1: Place a check-mark next to the activities you do with someone other than your spouse, who (or what) you do the activity with, and the frequency you do it. Listing something does *not* mean it's a problem in your marriage. The list is simply a starting point for analyzing *potential* areas of emotional infidelity. (Duo Track: see next page.)

ACTIVITY	PERSON (OR HOBBY/THING)	FREQUENCY
<input type="checkbox"/> Regular Talking	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Regular Emailing	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Regular Touching	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Spending Regular Time	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Vacationing or Travel	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Regular Giving	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Sharing a Hobby/Interest	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Problem Solving	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Decision Making	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	_____	_____

STEP 2: Ask your spouse to review your list above and invite them to add to it using the space provided below. Also, ask them to circle the ones in *your* list that they feel interfere with your marriage or the potential of your emotional connection. If you're in the Lone Ranger Track, put yourself in your spouse's "shoes" and answer yourself.

ACTIVITY	PERSON (OR HOBBY/THING)	FREQUENCY
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____	_____

STEP 3: Choose one from the list your spouse made in step 2 or one from the list you made in step 1 *that your spouse circled* and significantly curtail or eliminate this activity. Record your commitment below.

The activity I will curtail or eliminate is _____

The way I will accomplish this is by (be specific) _____

Spouse 2

STEP 1: Place a check-mark next to the activities you do with someone other than your spouse, who (or what) you do the activity with, and the frequency with which you do it. Listing something does *not* mean that it's a problem in your marriage. Your list is simply a starting point for analyzing *potential* areas of emotional infidelity.

ACTIVITY	PERSON (OR HOBBY/THING)	FREQUENCY
<input type="checkbox"/> Regular Talking	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Regular Emailing	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Regular Touching	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Spending Regular Time	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Vacationing or Travel	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Regular Giving	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Sharing a Hobby/Interest	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Problem Solving	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Decision Making	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	_____	_____

STEP 2: Ask your spouse to review your list above and invite them to add to it using the space provided below. Also, ask them to circle the ones in your list that they feel interfere with your marriage or the potential of your emotional connection.

ACTIVITY	PERSON (OR HOBBY/THING)	FREQUENCY
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____	_____

STEP 3: Choose one from the list your spouse made in step 2 or one from the list you made in step 1 *that your spouse circled* and significantly curtail or eliminate this activity. Record your commitment below.

The activity I will curtail or eliminate is _____

The way I will accomplish this is by (be specific) _____

<p>Exercise 8.2</p> <p>Vegetating: The Marriage Drain</p>
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Imagine the impact you would have on your relationship if you invested all the time you spend watching television into your marriage instead. And what would you compromise? What would you really give up?

STEP 1: Calculate below the number of hours you spend watching television during a typical week.

		<u>Spouse 2</u>
Monday	_____	_____
Tuesday	_____	_____
Wednesday	_____	_____
Thursday	_____	_____
Friday	_____	_____
Saturday	_____	_____
Sunday	_____	_____
TOTAL	_____	_____

STEP 2: Decide how many hours you will redirect toward your marriage and specifically what days, times, or programs these hours will come from. Record your commitment below. (Lone Ranger Track: note that committing more time to your marriage does *not* necessarily mean more time *together*. For example, it might mean that you spend more time reading or listening to marriage renewal material.)

Spouse 2

Exercise 8.3
Surprise Surprise

You might be surprised to learn how uncomfortable your spouse is when you're physically affectionate with certain people of the opposite sex. You think you're just being friendly and saying hello, but your spouse is feeling that your intimacy is being breached.

STEP 1: Make a list in the space provided below of your opposite sex friends.

Spouse 2

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

STEP 2: Ask your spouse if they're uncomfortable with the physical contact you have with any of the people on your list. If you're in the Lone Ranger Track and you feel it would be inappropriate to ask your spouse, then simply put yourself in their "shoes" and answer yourself.

STEP 3: Talk with your spouse about how you will adjust your behavior out of sensitivity for their feelings and as a sign of your commitment toward the renewal of your marriage.

Exercise 8.4

Adding “Save Yourself” to Your Marriage Mission Statement

Your marriage mission statement is work in progress. It will be interesting for you to watch your marriage mission statement evolve as you go through your workbook.

Review and revise your marriage mission statement in the space provided below so that it includes the value “Save Yourself.” Feel free to include details or examples of how the value will manifest in your marriage.

OUR MARRIAGE MISSION STATEMENT

Including “Put Love First,” “Give Presence,” “Move from ME to WE,” and “Save Yourself.”

Exercise 8.5

Save Yourself Marriage Assessment

Are you faithful to your spouse? I mean are you *really* faithful? Go to your computer and log onto www.MortFertel.com/assessments, click on "Fidelity," and take the electronic assessment. Record your score below.

Name _____

Date _____

Assessment Score _____

Spouse 2

Name _____

Date _____

Assessment Score _____

<p>Exercise 8.6</p> <p>What it Takes to Succeed</p>
--

At this point in your life, you've probably realized that you can't have everything. If you want a successful career, you can't spend three days a week at the beach. If you want to be healthy, you can't eat junk food everyday. It's the same with your relationship. Succeeding with your marriage is *not* compatible with certain activities.

STEP 1: Make a list of your areas of success in the space provided below. Feel free to include past and present. Don't forget sports, academics, professional, communal, and personal.

STEP 2: Next to each success, list one sacrifice you had to make to achieve your success. In other words, list one thing that was *not* compatible with your achievement.

STEP 3: In the last column below, indicate whether or not your achievement was worth the sacrifice.

For example:

ACHIEVEMENT	SACRAFICE			
<u>Lost 20 lbs</u>	<u>Cut out Dessert</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	worth it	<input type="checkbox"/> not worth it

ACHIEVEMENT	SACRAFICE			
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	worth it	<input type="checkbox"/> not worth it
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	worth it	<input type="checkbox"/> not worth it
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	worth it	<input type="checkbox"/> not worth it
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	worth it	<input type="checkbox"/> not worth it

Spouse 2

ACHIEVEMENT	SACRAFICE			
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	worth it	<input type="checkbox"/> not worth it
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	worth it	<input type="checkbox"/> not worth it
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	worth it	<input type="checkbox"/> not worth it
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	worth it	<input type="checkbox"/> not worth it

Exercise 8.7
Fidelity Check

Infidelity does not have to be sexual, nor does it have to be with someone of the opposite sex. Emotional infidelity can even occur with a relative.

STEP 1: Fill in the blank spaces below. In the second column (hours talking/week), calculate only the hours spent talking about *personal* matters. For example, time spent talking to your spouse about your budget would not count. Similarly, time spent talking to your father about estate planning would not count.

	<u>NAME</u>	<u>HOURS TALKING/WEEK</u>
Your Spouse	_____	_____
Your Best Friend	_____	_____
Your Closest Relative	_____	_____

Spouse 2

	<u>NAME</u>	<u>HOURS TALKING/WEEK</u>
Your Spouse	_____	_____
Your Best Friend	_____	_____
Your Closest Relative	_____	_____

STEP 2: Review the above and consider what it means in the context of what you learned in this phase of the program. What changes do you need to make? What adjustments would be healthiest for your marriage? Record your observations and commitments below.

Spouse 2

Exercise 8.8
TV Fast Experiment

As a general rule, when the TV is on, your relationship is “off.”

STEP 1: Review pages 168-169 in *Marriage Fitness*.

STEP 2: Talk with your spouse about the potential benefits to your marriage (and to your children) of reducing TV viewing. Explore with each other whether or not you’d be willing to experiment with a “TV Fast” or a new TV policy. Don’t pressure your spouse. Ask for a small commitment. Maybe just try a “TV Fast” for a day.

STEP 3: Complete the contract below.

TV POLICY/TV FAST CONTRACT

On this _____ day of _____ in the year _____, I, the undersigned, hereby agree to:

TV FAST. To not turn the TV on during the following times _____

TV POLICY. The following TV policy _____

Print Name (1) _____

Signature _____

Spouse 2

Print Name (2) _____

Signature _____

STEP 4: Experiment with your new TV policy or “TV Fast.”

YOUR RELATIONSHIP HOMEWORK

Phase 8

**“Hold Back” Emotional Intimacy from 1 Relationship
Reduce Physical Contact with Opposite Sex Friends
Replace TV Watching with Marriage Building
Dress for Success**

Continue

Stay Involved with One of Your Spouse’s Hobbies
Duo Track Only: Continue with your New Hobby
Stop or Curtail One Interfering Interest
Invite Your Spouse to Help Solve One of YOUR Problems
Solicit Your Spouse’s Advice Before Making Decisions
Give Daily to your Spouse
Talk Charge
Touch Charge
Date Night
Business Meeting
Read Your Marriage Vision Statement Aloud Daily
Table Your Marital Problems & Issues
Take the Pressure Off Your Spouse
Continue YOUR Fixing

Phase 9

HOW TO STAY IN LOVE

One day Baron Rothschild was walking down the street when he saw a man begging. Baron Rothschild reached into his pocket and gave the man a dollar. The beggar said to Baron Rothschild, “Baron Rothschild, only a dollar? Yesterday your son gave me \$20.”

Baron Rothschild responded, “My son can afford more than I can. He’s got a rich father.”

The process by which you acquire something dramatically changes how you *experience* what you’ve acquired. Baron Rothschild and his son both had money, but their experience of it was different because of how they acquired it.

In the story about Baron Rothschild, the process by which he and his son acquired money impacted their *experience* of their money. But when it comes to your marriage, your process impacts much more than your experience of your relationship; it determines whether you have love at all or not.

When people come to me for help with their marriage, I sometimes ask, “What do you want?”

A common response is, “I want to be in love.”

You can’t *be* in love. Love is not a static experience. It’s not a place you arrive. You can *be* in Alabama. You can *be* in Florida. You can *be* in Baltimore. You can’t *be* in love. You can only *become* in love.

Love is not a goal you achieve after completing your Marriage Fitness program. You don’t ever roll over in bed, look at your spouse, and say, “Honey, we made it. We’re in love.”

Love is the experience you have as a result of growing closer to your spouse. Love *is* the process. Love is a verb. And the moment you cease from the process of growing closer, your love will cease too.

When I begin coaching sessions with a new client, very often I begin by helping them identify their goals. But what’s always fascinating to the client is that they experience love and fulfillment long before they achieve their goals. As soon as they begin the process of moving toward that goal, they find hope, joy, and peace.

However, in other ways the whole process takes much longer than clients imagine. The reason for that is because clients think they will be “done” once they achieve their objectives. But reaching objectives, no matter how lofty, does not bring marital happiness. It’s the *process* and the experience of relationship growth that is love.

It’s important to have goals. We need goals. And we should try to achieve them. But not so we can achieve them; so that we can be *achieving!*

The key to marital satisfaction is paradoxical. In order to be happy, you have to always have something that you’re unhappy with so that you’re in the process of fixing. If you’re too content and not in the process of improving, you won’t be happy.

Loving Discontent

Most of us are unhappy, not because we’re dissatisfied with who we are or how we love—for example, insensitive, not thoughtful, not compassionate, impatient—but because of our being discontent with what we possess.

The secret to life and love is to reverse that. The secret is to be happy with what most people are unhappy with and unhappy with what most people are happy with. The

secret is to be discontent with *who* we are and our ability to love, and content with whatever we possess.

Happiness in marriage is not a synonym for satisfaction or complacency, but it's having a vision or a goal which still has to be attained.

This explains why your feelings may have vacillated so dramatically since beginning of this program.

Sometimes I get an email from someone doing the program filled with excitement and love for their spouse. The next day another email describes their despair and disappointment. But objectively, you must admit that the state of a marriage can't be too different from one day to the next. But what can be different, which makes all the difference, is that one day you're progressing and the next day you've stalled.

Imagine you're standing on a river bank. The moment you jump into the river, everything is different. You're wet, you're moving, and it's exhilarating. But the truth is you're not far from the point on the bank from which you jumped.

Your marriage works the same way. You don't have to *be* in a dramatically different place to feel dramatically different. Love is like a river. All you have to do is jump in, be in the process, and everything changes instantly.

YOUR RELATIONSHIP HOMEWORK

Phase 9

Make a DETAILED Plan to Continue Your Marriage Renewal Process

Continue

“Hold Back” Emotional Intimacy from 1 Relationship
Reduce Physical Contact with Opposite Sex Friends
Replace TV Watching with Marriage Building
Dress for Success
Stay Involved with One of Your Spouse’s Hobbies
Duo Track Only: Continue with your New Hobby
Stop or Curtail One Interfering Interest
Invite Your Spouse to Help Solve One of YOUR Problems
Solicit Your Spouse’s Advice Before Making Decisions
Give Daily to your Spouse
Talk Charge
Touch Charge
Date Night
Business Meeting
Read Your Marriage Vision Statement Aloud Daily
Table Your Marital Problems & Issues
Take the Pressure Off Your Spouse
Continue YOUR Fixing

Ensuring Lasting Love

You only have one assignment in Phase 9—to make a *detailed* plan to continue your marriage renewal work. But that one assignment is the most important assignment in this workbook. That one assignment will determine the *long term* meaning of all the progress you’ve made thus far.

The chances are good that your marriage is headed in the right direction now. But how are you going to stay on track?

This program gave you the boost your marriage needed, but you’re probably wondering: “What now? What’s my next assignment? Who do I email when I need to vent? Who do I ask questions to? Who will inspire me when I’m not motivated? Where do I get new ideas to keep my relationship fresh?”

It’s true. Your Marriage Fitness program does its job, but is also leaves *you* with a job to be done. You have to continue the journey.

Marriage renewal is not something you start and finish; it’s an *ongoing process*. And unless you stay “plugged-in”, you’ll go back to your old ways.

We all know what it’s like to succeed with a diet or an exercise program only to fall back weeks later?

In marriage too, you’d be amazed how easy it is to slip back into old habits. And how quickly new habits can fall by the wayside. But you don’t want that to happen to

you. And that's why it's crucial to have a maintenance program that gives you ongoing support, inspiration, and marriage renewal assistance.

I speak from personal experience when I say that marriage renewal is an *ongoing* effort. I'm constantly seeking new inspiration and ideas for my marriage and I'm convinced that it's this effort that keeps my relationship fresh.

As you leave the safety, support, and nurturing of this program, I encourage you to plan to continue working on your marriage *within the context of an organized structure*.

Trust me. You don't want to go from your Marriage Fitness program to nothing. It'll be a shock to your marriage and you risk losing everything.

The easiest way for you to accomplish this is to join Marriage Fitness Plugged-In™. Marriage Fitness Plugged-In™ is a marriage maintenance program that offers you ongoing support, inspiration, and marriage renewal assistance. To register or for more information, go to www.MortFertel.com/Plugged-In or call 410.764.1552.

If for some reason, Marriage Fitness Plugged-In™ does not meet your needs, your assignment remains the same—secure a plan to continue your process of marriage renewal.

You certainly don't have to utilize my product and services. However, it's crucial that you do not view the end of this program as the end of your marriage renewal effort. It must continue if you are to continue to succeed with your marriage. Make a plan!

Here's what you get when you join Marriage Fitness Plugged-In™:

A MONTHLY OPEN-MIC Q&A TELECONFERENCE

Ask me any question or listen and learn as I respond to others. Every month I'll teach you how to handle new situations and give you insights into the developing dynamics of a marriage in renewal. (\$79 VALUE)

HOME LEARNING AUDIO COLLECTION

Each month you'll get an audio recording of the above mentioned Q&A teleconference to add to your home learning collection. You'll never miss a teleconference...and inspiration and information will always be just a click away. (\$29.99 VALUE)

A WEEKLY ELECTRONIC WORKBOOK

There's simply no substitute for having guided work to do on your marriage each week. When you join Marriage Fitness Plugged-In™, *every week* you get a brand new marriage fitness exercise to work on. These exercises were not part of the Marriage Fitness Tele-Boot Camp™ nor are they published anywhere else. They are exclusively designed for Marriage Fitness Plugged-In members. (\$29.99 VALUE)

THE DEAR MORT REPORT™

The Dear Mort Report™ is published monthly exclusively for Marriage Fitness Plugged-In™ members. Each issue will feature a real life scenario, my analysis of the situation, and my advice on how the couple should proceed. Cases will be selected based on their value to a wide audience and my response will include teachings relevant for all marriages, inspirational stories, and memorable quotes. (\$69.99 VALUE)

ACCESS TO MARRIAGE FITNESS TELE-BOOT CAMP™ TELE-SEMINARS

When you become a Marriage Fitness Plugged-In™ member, you get FREE access to any Marriage Fitness Tele-Boot Camp™ tele-seminar. Need a pick-me-up or a refresher course, just call-in anytime. (\$199 VALUE)

50% OFF ALL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

As a Marriage Fitness Plugged-In™ member, you get 50% OFF every product or service you purchase (excludes marriage coaching). That includes books, CDs, home learning systems, seminars, workshops, and future product and service offerings.

Wow! Right?

If all that doesn't keep your marriage moving in the right direction, then nothing will. And that's exactly what you need to ensure that you will not lose the momentum you gained while going through this program.

Now you might be concerned about how much all this is going to cost. After all, if you do the math, the features and benefits of a Marriage Fitness Plugged-In™ membership are worth \$407.97/month. But I'm personally committed to creating a marriage renewal maintenance program that's affordable for everyone. So I decided to offer the Marriage Fitness Plugged-In™ membership for only \$29.99/month. You know what that means don't you? That means that for less than \$1/day you can get ongoing marriage support, guidance, instruction, and inspiration. Is your marriage worth \$1/day? Of course it is.

And here's a bonus offer for you. When you register, I'll give you your choice of one of the following bonuses:

- FREE copy of Marriage Fitness (\$19.95 VALUE)
- FREE *audio* of the live seminar recording of "Put Love First" with Mort Fertel (\$15.99 VALUE)
- FREE *DVD* of the live seminar recording of "Put Love First" with Mort Fertel (\$17.99 VALUE)

Oh, one more thing about your Marriage Fitness Plugged-In™ membership. It comes with my RISK-FREE 100% UNCONDITIONAL MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE. If you're not satisfied for any reason, you can cancel your membership at any time. No questions asked and no reason required. Now I can't get any fairer than that.

But before you register, let me give you a sincere alternative. Turn to the next page.

Exercise 9.1
Planning for *Lasting Love*

I believe that the Marriage Fitness Plugged-In™ program is a great way for you to continue growing in your marriage. The different components of the program offer you everything you need to stay on track. However, there are other ways. And I want you realize that this is not about me or Marriage Fitness; this is about *you!*

You can choose to register for Marriage Fitness Plugged-In™ or not. That's not what's important. What's important is that you choose to "plug-in" to some structure or organized plan that will guide you to continued marital growth. Maybe there are other "marriage maintenance" programs or maybe you can structure your own. Marriage Fitness Plugged-In™ makes it easy for you because I do the work for you and make sure that you get the information, inspiration, and, most importantly, the weekly assignments that you need to *become* in love.

STEP 1: Decide if you want to register for Marriage Fitness Plugged-In™ or make an alternative marriage maintenance plan. Record your choice below.

- Marriage Fitness Plugged-In™
- Alternative Marriage Maintenance Plan

STEP 2: If you chose to register for Marriage Fitness Plugged-In™, then go to www.MortFertel.com/plugged-in, complete your registration, and send me an email to receive your free bonus registration gift.

If you chose to design your own marriage maintenance plan, designate your plan in the space provided below. I recommend that your plan include the following components.

A good marriage maintenance plan should be multi-sensory. Research proves that everyone learns differently. Some people learn better by reading. Others by listening. Others by doing or watching. But there's no question that all your senses contribute to your understanding of a subject and your ability to master it. Your plan should include reading, listening to Audio Files/CDs, and "in the field" assignments.

A good marriage maintenance plan should include access to a neutral 3rd party expert. You're going to need help, input, or advice occasionally. Make sure someone reliable is accessible for you.

If you'd like, you can email me your plan (MortFertel@MarriageMax.com) and I'd be happy to critique it and offer you suggestions for improvement.

The Beauty of Love

The question is asked, "Is there anything more beautiful in life than a young couple clasping hands and pure hearts in the path of marriage? Can there be anything more beautiful than young love?"

And the answer is given. "Yes, there is a more beautiful thing. It is the spectacle of an old man and an old woman finishing their journey together on that path. Their hands are gnarled, but still clasped; their faces are seamed, but still radiant; their hearts are physically bowed and tired, but still strong with love and devotion for one another. Yes, there is a more beautiful thing than young love. Old love."

Unknown

Personal Journal Opportunity

Questions for Contemplation:

- What are your concluding thoughts and feelings?
- In general, how are you feeling? What are you thinking? What's in your heart right now? What's on your mind?
