

Marriage 101
Self-Inquiry Journal
Updated 2/16/11

Instructions

Use this file as a journal, almost a diary of your experiences in *Marriage 101*, placing your answers after each question we pose. As emphasized throughout the course, probably the single most important requirement for successful and happy relationships is self-awareness. With this in mind, we are asking you to stretch yourselves and learn more about just who you are.

The questions extend the questions we will be asking each week in your small group discussions, so it makes the most sense to **answer these journal questions during the week after the class on each topic.**

The questions are often very personal. What you get out of this assignment is directly proportional to what you put in. Honesty and care will pay off in answering them. Be assured that your answers are confidential and completely for your own use, to be shared in class only if you wish to do so.

Along with the questions to answer, there are two “**Outside Class Exercises**” for you to do and then journal about briefly. **Do them when they come up so as to be able to discuss them in the relevant class which follows them.** These should be fun while offering you another avenue to learn about yourself and relationships.

If you put a lot into this, as we are hoping you will, you will probably wish to save your answers (especially the last ones on plans for your future relationships) for review later in your life.

To receive credit for this assignment, hand or e-mail a copy of your completed Journal to your small group leader. We will not read your answers, but only check the journals cursorily to be sure that you completed this pass-fail assignment.

Do Outside Class Exercise #1 before Breakout Group #2 where you will discuss it. Outside Class Exercise #1: Interview someone who knows you well about what you are like in relationships (generally) and with him/her (specifically).

Ask them:

- What is it usually like to be with you?
- What are your greatest assets, strengths?
- What are your greatest challenges, blindspots?
- Compare what they say with what you believe.

Journal about this experience here:

Start journaling here after Class #2.

Class #2: “Developing emotional strength: Capacities and sensitivities.”

General description

Write 10 adjectives that describe yourself, and follow these with a brief narrative paragraph about what you know about yourself in relationships.

Feelings and Self-Esteem

What is your philosophy about expressing feelings, particularly sadness, anger, fear, pride, and love? Are any of these particularly difficult for you to express or to see expressed by others? What do you know about possible reasons for this?

How stable is your self-esteem? Do you mainly like yourself or not? What do you admire and what do you dislike? Can you forgive yourself your faults? Would you want to go out with you if you asked yourself out?

Injuries and Healings

What difficult events or periods have you gone through? Write about any significant psychological insults and injuries you have sustained, your losses, disappointments, trials, and tribulations.

What have been the lasting effects on you?

How did you gird and protect yourself against this ever happening again?

How do these injuries and the ways you protect and heal affect your intimate relationships today?

Core Negative Image

Based on your assessment of your most painful times with adults (and possibly with friends) when you were growing up, what would you say you most dread happening in relationships that matter to you? You fill in the blank for your worst fear (your "core negative image") by completing: What if he/she really is...a vicious person; a cold-hearted witch; a betrayer; an incompetent; constricted; selfish; an alcoholic; etc.? My worst fear is: -----

Next recall the last big, unproductive fight you had with someone, and see if you aren't in some way reacting to this feared image of the other.

Class #3: Intimacy and Love

What do "intimacy" and "love" mean to you?
Have you ever been in love? What was it like?

How much do you trust others?
Have you had experiences that disillusioned you and made you less trusting?

Concerning giving and receiving care:

What makes you feel taken care of?

Did you feel taken care of as a child? In what ways yes and in what ways no?

When you feel upset or stressed, how able are you to seek support, to communicate your needs and feelings openly, and to feel supported and understood by others?

How comfortable are you with people who seem "needy", ask for help, or require your assistance?

How responsive, accepting, and sensitive are you when a friend asks for your

help or care? When not so responsive, how come?

Class #4: Sexual Intimacy

How comfortable are you with your sexual feelings and desires?

Can you talk about sex with your friends? with your lovers?

Can you say “no” when you don’t want to engage in a particular sexual activity?

What feelings do you have towards your partner when engaging in sex?

What problems or hang-ups (if any) do you have concerning sex?

What might your preferred sexual fantasies say about you? (Consider that sometimes they are attempts to heal areas of particular vulnerability.)

Do Outside Class Exercise #2 before Breakout Group #5 where you will discuss it:

Outside Class Exercise #2: Compatibility

Get together with your class partner for a long talk, possibly over dinner, and get to know that person better. Ask questions that will allow you to later journal here about how well you would match up on Sam Hamburg’s compatibility dimensions. Be sure to read the Hamburg readings for details of what to look for before you get together. (If your class partner would not be the right sex for you, you can either leave that dimension blank or, better for the exercise, imagine yourself to be of the opposite sex and play around with the answer based on how important sexuality and good looks are for you.)

The Practical Dimension:

The Sexual Dimension:

The Wavelength Dimension:

Class #5: Partner Selection, dating, cohabiting, breaking up

Only if you missed the small group discussion, answer the following:

What qualities are you most attracted to in a potential partner?

Recall the people you have sought out as partners.

Which have been good relationships, and which haven’t?

What made the difference?

What might your choice of partners say about you? about possible areas of weakness or conflict which you are trying unconsciously to master by "dating them"?

Classes #6: Conflict and Marital "Fighting"

How comfortable are you with:

- asking for things
- arguing
- being a leader and taking charge
- being a follower
- receiving criticism
- giving criticism
- compromising
- saying "no"
- apologizing
- being alone

What things really bother you about yourself?

About others?

Do other people view you as excessively intolerant or critical in these areas?

When was the last time you thought someone did not like you?

Why did you think this?

Do you sometimes feel the same way about yourself?

Which of the following reactions to conflict apply to you?

1. When my partner does something that makes me angry, I usually let him/her know about it.
2. I often push my partner to talk about issues even when it is clear that my partner doesn't want to talk.
3. If I had my choice I'd avoid conflicts and disagreements.
4. When my partner brings up a relationship issue, I tend to withdraw, become silent, or refuse to discuss the matter further.
5. I often agree with my partner's wishes just to end discussions.
6. It is very easy for me to get angry with my partner.
7. Sometimes I don't talk to my partner because I've noticed that talking leads to fighting.

When you are in a conflict with another person, what can they do

that really gets you angry?

that feels unfair or inappropriate?

that helps you hang in and try to work things out?

Do you tend to hold grudges, or is it relatively easy for you to forgive others?

Is there something hurtful that someone has done which still preoccupies you?

Why is it hard to let go of this?

Do this before Class #7 where we will discuss your experience.

Review of Parental Interviews

Now that you have completed your write-ups of your parental interviews, try to answer the following questions

Parents generally

What did/do you like about each of your parents?

What did/do you *not* like about each of your parents?

Do you consciously wish to be like either of your parents in particular ways? to be different or opposite in certain ways?

How do your experiences and evaluations of your parents influence what you are seeking from your adult relationships?

Communication models

What was communication like in your family growing up?

Was it OK to discuss things openly?

Were some topics or feelings out of bounds? Which ones?

How did your parents deal with conflict between themselves? with the children? with you specifically?

Hot buttons

What things do each of your parents do that make you easily upset or angry?

Why do you think you get so upset?

What content areas were especially likely to provoke fights in your family (neatness/punctuality; thoughtlessness; grades/work; sexuality; dishonesty; etc)?

Unfinished business and wishes

Do you or did you feel especially unloved or unappreciated by your parents?

Did you feel overly criticized or controlled?

Did you feel that your parents' love was too contingent on good behavior or accomplishments?

Is there some event from childhood that you still can't forget or forgive?

Childhood stress

How happy were your parents being married to each other?

If not happy, what were the details of this unhappiness?

Did your parents divorce? If so, what have been the effects on you?

Has one or both of your parents died? If so, what have been the effects on you?

During your childhood, did your family have to cope with a particular emotional problem, such as aggression between parents, a depressed parent, or a parent who was somewhat emotionally wounded? What implications might this have for your marriage and your other close relationships (friendships, relationships with your parents, your siblings, your children)?

Class #8: Unanticipated Challenges of Marriage

How would you feel if your partner had an affair?
If you did?

Have you ever physically injured someone or been injured by someone in a close relationship?

What are your thoughts and feelings about this?

Do you think physical violence is always grounds for ending a relationship?

Do you have a problem with alcohol or drugs?

Have you been romantically involved with someone who does?

What are your thoughts in this area?

Would you be able to seek professional help if things became difficult in your marriage?
Why or why not?

Class #9: Central Expectable Challenges of Marriage

How much time do you think married couples should spend together? with mutual friends? with in-laws? How much time should each partner spend working?

In what ways do you think that being a wife is different from being a husband?
How do you feel about this?

What are your attitudes about money?

About saving and keeping track of it?

About its symbolic significance?

Other thoughts concerning money?

What are your attitudes about children?

Do you want to have them? How many?

What is your image of yourself as a parent?

What do you think you will enjoy?

What might be hard? What are your hopes for your children?

What sort of discipline do you plan to use?

What religion (if any) do you expect to raise them in?

Other thoughts concerning children?

Class #10: Marriage 101 Course Overall

What are the most important things you learned in this course?

About relationships in general?

About yourself?

About your future relationships?

Write a one paragraph "Letter to Myself" in which you make several specific promises to yourself concerning your future behavior in relationships.

