

EQUAL PARTNERS:

Finding Joy and Oneness in Marriage



***Presented by
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***“Help one another as
equal partners.”***

*--Proclamation on the Family,
Sept. 23, 1995*

*“When we speak of marriage as a partnership, let us speak of marriage as a **full** partnership. We do not want our LDS women to be **silent** partners or **limited** partners in that eternal assignment! Please be a contributing and **full** partner.”*

(President Spencer W. Kimball, Ensign, Nov. 1978, p. 106.)

“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

“This is a great mystery...”

-- Eph. 5:32; see also Gen. 2:24

Currently, the greatest threats to marriage are not “the big crises” such as infidelity, abuse, or bankruptcy.

The biggest threat to most marriages are the absolutely normal, universal challenges and adversities faced by every couple in some form or another.

We build strength and unity in our marriages by facing and overcoming these challenges- together.

(1 Cor. 10:13; 1 Peter 4:12-13)

NORMAL CHALLENGE #1: Normal Developmental Changes Over Time

1) Developmental Stages of a Marriage Relationship

Stage 1: **The “In-Love” Stage** (*Fairy Tale Relationship*)

Stage 2: **The “Power Struggle”** (*Awareness of Differences*)

Stage 3: **“Mature Love”** (*based on genuine knowledge and respect*)

2) Developmental Stages of the Female Brain (*with Impact on the Couple*)

Stage 1: **Youth** (*estrogen – focus on attracting a male partner*)

Stage 2: **Motherhood** (*oxytocin – focus on nurturing*)

Stage 3: **Midlife** (*decrease in estrogen & oxytocin; relatively stronger presence of testosterone – focus on individuality, personal competence – less patient with demands of others.*)

NORMAL CHALLENGE #2: Differences in Male/Female Perceptual Styles

The most common marital argument topic: “Who’s Right?”

The miracle of complementarity: *Each sees what the other doesn’t*

Male perceptual style: *Linear, rational, sequential, focused*

Female perceptual style: *Broad awareness; networking; connectivity*

H and G in the 21st century: *Hunting and gathering – still alive & well!*

NORMAL CHALLENGE #3: Differences in Male/Female Bonding Styles

1) **Male Bonding Style:** Shared activity, especially physical activity

2) **Female Bonding Style:** Talking – especially about feelings, problems

3) **His Needs, Her Needs:**

- a. **His:**
 - 1. Physical Connection
 - 2. Recreational Companionship

- b. **Hers:**
 - 1. Verbal Bonding
 - 2. Affection

CONFLICT IS INEVITABLE -

***BUT NOT NECESSARILY
LETHAL!***

"DANGER SIGNS": NEGATIVE STRATEGIES

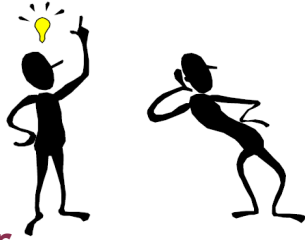
FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT:

1. Escalation
2. Invalidation
3. Negative Interpretation
4. Avoidance & Withdrawal

**THE QUALITY OF THE COMMUNICATION
DETERMINES
THE QUALITY OF A RELATIONSHIP**

*Verbal
Tonal
Nonverbal*

THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS



Sender

Receiver

1. Message >>>>>

<<<<<< 2. Reflection

3. Confirm/
Correct >>>>>

>>> 4. Switch Roles <<<

The goal: Communication that is:

1. Effective
2. Respectful

EFFECTIVE LISTENING SKILLS:

- Listen to understand, don't listen to respond.
- Seek first to understand, then to be understood.
- Add nothing to your reflection. Just mirror back and validate what the speaker said to you.



EFFECTIVE SPEAKING SKILLS:

- Speak in digestible chunks, in sentences not pages.
- Use "I messages", not "you messages."
- Be clear, but be kind. The point is to be heard and understood. Don't put the listener on the defensive.

The Cardinal Rule for Solving Problems:

Separate Problem Discussion From Problem Resolution

*Because you can't resolve what you don't understand,
and you can't understand a shared problem from one perspective alone.
You need all the puzzle pieces to put a puzzle together.*

PUZZLE PIECE #1: Male-Female Differences:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. <u>Brain Function:</u> | Hers: Connective | His: Focused |
| 2. <u>Hormonal Pattern:</u> | Hers: Undulating | His: Constant |
| 3. <u>Friendship Defin.:</u> | Hers: Talking | His: Shared Activity |
| 4. <u>Communication:</u> | Hers: For Bonding | His: For Task Completion |

PUZZLE PIECE #2: Love Languages

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Verbal Affirmation | (My Top 2): |
| 2. Physical Affection | |
| 3. Focused Time | (Spouse Top 2): |
| 4. Practical Service | |
| 5. Gifts | |

PUZZLE PIECE #3: Personality Traits (MBTI):

E/I: Extroversion / Introversion

S/N: Sensation / Intuition

T/F: Thinking / Feeling

J/P: Judgment / Perception

Myself:

E	-	I
S	-	N
T	-	F
J	-	P

My Spouse:

E	-	I
S	-	N
T	-	F
J	-	P

Collaborative Problem Solving:

1. **Name** - Identify the problem you want to resolve, set agenda
2. **Brainstorm** – Consider all possible solutions w/o editing them
3. **Evaluate** – Assess pros and cons of all possible solutions
4. **Plan** – Decide on a solution; make specific assignments
5. **Revise**- Try the plan – keep what works, change what doesn't

Developing Respectful, Middle-Ground Solutions:

1. **Synergy** – blending ideas into an integrated solution
2. **Sequencing** – taking turns
3. **Compromise** – finding middle ground both can live with
4. **Giftng** – giving them their way (don't do this all the time)

The Great Secret: The “Change First” Rule

Also Known As: Repentance

Why It Works: Circular Causality – A causes B, & B causes A

Best Books and References:

- The Female Brain, Louise Brizendine
- Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus, John Grey
- His Needs, Her Needs, Willard Hartley

- Fighting for Your Marriage, Howard Markman, Scott M. Stanley
- The Feeling Good Handbook, David D. Burns

- The Five Languages of Love, Gary Chapman
- Please Understand Me, David Kiersey and Marilyn Bates
- Counseling With Our Councils, M. Russell Ballard