

Rules of Engagement

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By understanding God's intended purpose for marriage and learning how both husbands and wives play distinct roles in fulfilling His plan, you become better positioned for partnership. Partnership is important for overcoming obstacles, navigating difficult terrain and becoming triumphant together. As you encounter various adventures and challenges, good communication will be required every step of the way.



SESSION OBJECTIVES

This Rules of Engagement session is designed to help you:

- (a)** partner up and work together as teammates
- (b)** understand the importance of prioritising harmony and mutual objectives (especially when facing difficulties)
- (c)** communicate successfully

God's economy.

In at least four different places throughout scripture (Genesis 2:14, Matthew 19:5, Mark 10:8, Ephesians 5:31), we are told that a man will leave his mother and father and be joined to his wife and they shall become one flesh, so they are no longer two, but one. Marriage, in God's economy, is multiplication. In this light, two halves don't make a whole. If you multiply a half with a half, you end up with a quarter - you end up worse off than if you had not gotten married.

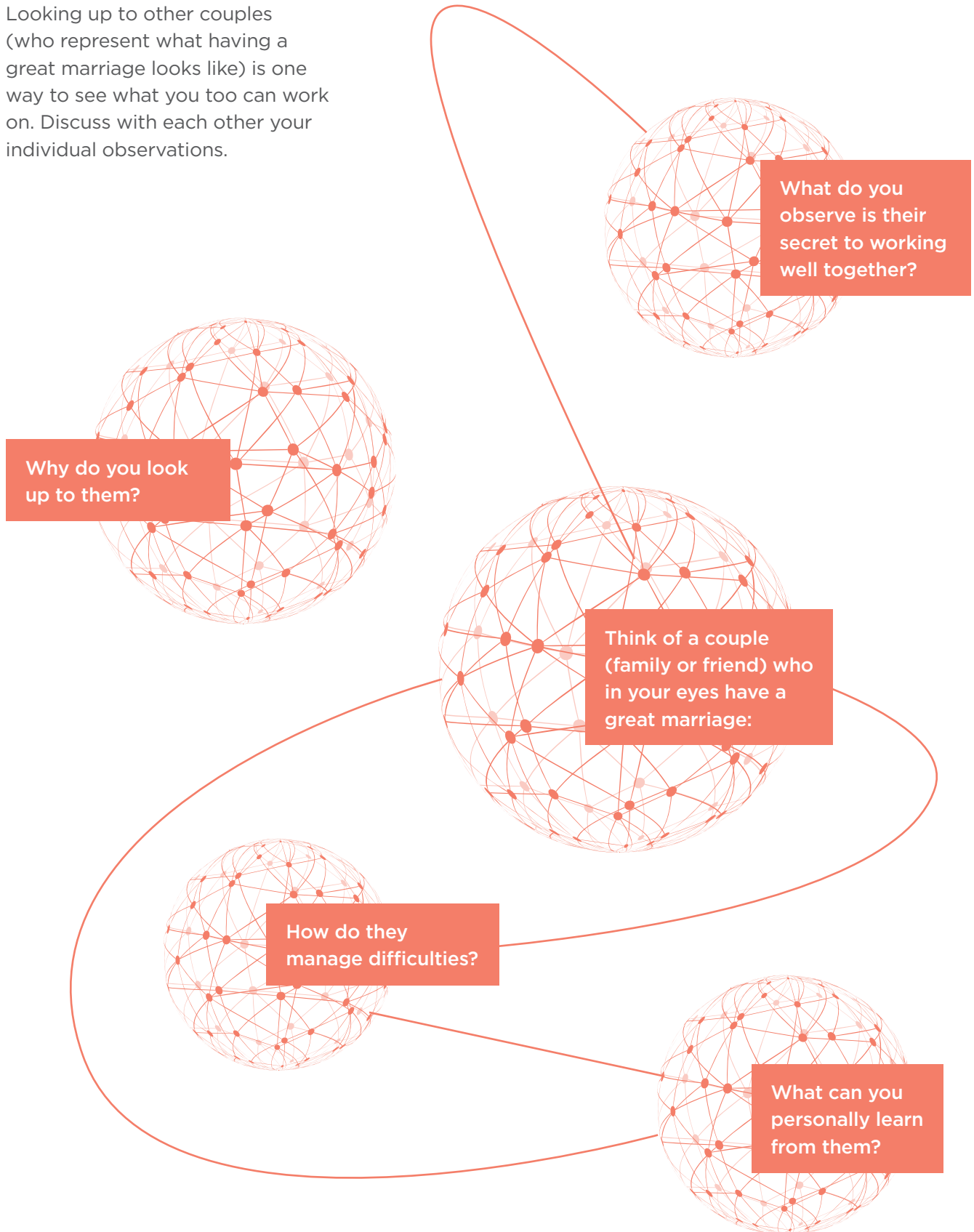
**MARRIAGE DOESN'T FIX
PERSONAL PROBLEMS,
RATHER, IT CAN AMPLIFY
THEM. THEREFORE...**

**...don't merely
be concerned
with marrying
the right
person, work on
becoming the
right person!**



Role models.

Looking up to other couples (who represent what having a great marriage looks like) is one way to see what you too can work on. Discuss with each other your individual observations.



The rally ride of your life.

Getting married is a little bit like climbing into a rally car with your teammate, as you embark upon a fast-paced rally ride along the racetrack of life. One team member has the steering wheel in their hands, whereas the other is holding on to the road map. One does the talking - navigating the best route, highlighting obstacles and giving directions. The other does the driving - keeping their eyes on the road, while matching the instructions they hear with what they see. They are on the same team but play unique roles that will help them succeed.

AS HUSBANDS AND WIVES UPHOLD THEIR UNIQUE, YET EQUALLY-VALUABLE ROLES, ONE IS NOT MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE OTHER. BOTH ARE EQUALLY EMPOWERED TO INFLUENCE THE OUTCOME OF THE RACE. FOR THIS REASON...

...they need to understand the importance of agreement and alignment.

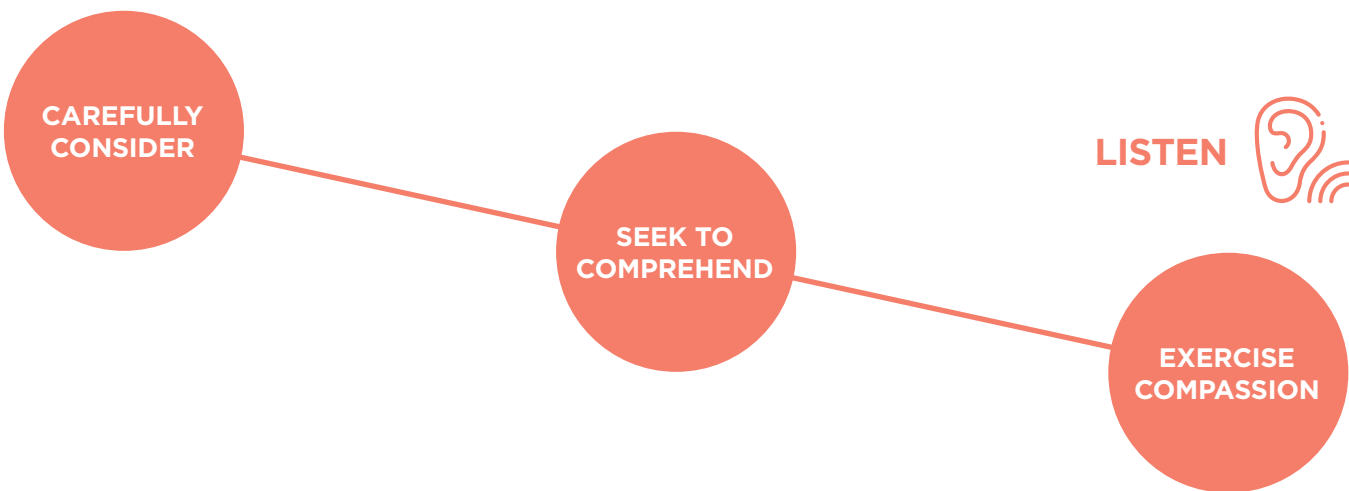
Successful communication.

Along the racetrack of life, you will face inevitable obstacles. When dealing with problems, successful couples' triumph over tricky terrain by upholding the secret to a successful partnership. What's the secret? Researchers from the Gottman Institute assert that in any dialogue, both the speaker and the listener have three primary responsibilities.



SPEAK

ATTENTIVENESS	As you speak, be aware of how your words make the other person feel. Choose your words carefully so as to maintain clarity and compassion. If you trigger the wrong emotions, listening may cease.
TOLERANCE	Understand that the listener may have a different, yet equally valid perspective. Therefore, it's important to be open when expressing your own views. Authoritarian and know-it-all approaches repel.
TACT	Convert criticism into kindness, by focusing more on connection rather than correction. It's more effective to communicate what you want, than what you don't want.



CONSIDER	Carefully consider what the speaker is saying by listening attentively without emotional defensiveness.
COMPREHEND	Seek to really understand the other person's perspective. Take time to put yourself in the other person's shoes.
COMPASSION	Endeavour to feel what the other person might be feeling. Rather than judgment, compassion and kindness. Allows for diversity of opinion yet maintenance of unity.

For him.



How effective do you think you are when speaking and listening to your fiancé?

SPEAKING					LISTENING				
Attentiveness					Consider				
Tolerance					Comprehend				
Tact					Compassion				

Q: What areas of communication do you most need to improve?

Q: What commitment will you make today to grow in these areas?

How effective do you think your fiancé is when speaking and listening to you?

SPEAKING					LISTENING				
Attentiveness					Consider				
Tolerance					Comprehend				
Tact					Compassion				



NOTE: EXERCISE WISDOM

As you express to your fiancé how effective you believe their communication ability is, employ your own effective speaking and listening skills. Rather than judgment, criticism or correction, this is a time to communicate with honesty, sensitivity and compassion – for the express purpose of enhancing your mutual communication and improving your partnership.

For her.



How effective do you think you are when speaking and listening to your fiancé?

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DISCUSSION POINTS

Take turns practising your effective partnership (connect and communicate):

Identify an issue that you might have different perspectives on. Instead of winning the other over to your own way of thinking or fixing problems, focus instead on partnering together as a team. Take turns to speak with wisdom and to listen with understanding.

Q: What can you do together to regularly practice effective communication?