

How to use this journal

To help you get the most out of your journal, we have used symbols for specific activities:



When you write something down



When you talk with your partner



When you sit back and reflect



When you note down your intentions—for example, your plans for a date night or hopes for the future



When you swap journals and write something in your partner's journal that will be helpful for them to look back on in the future

Following the course, we hope the journal will serve as a reminder of what you've discovered about each other and the journey you're on as a couple, and help you to put into practice what you've learned.

Welcome to The Pre-Marriage Course...

This course is built on universal principles about marriage that are relevant to any couple, anywhere.

Strong marriages don't just develop automatically. Our hope is that you'll discover the attitudes, the values, and the habits that are needed to build a healthy and strong marriage that will last a lifetime.

This journal is designed for you to be able to reflect, to talk, and to dream together about your future, not only on the course but afterwards too. There are no right or wrong answers and no one else will see your journal.

Our hope is that you will pick up tools from the course that you can use to invest in your marriage for the rest of your lives. And we hope you'll have fun finding out things you didn't previously know about your partner.

Whether you are engaged or exploring marriage, you are on an exciting journey.

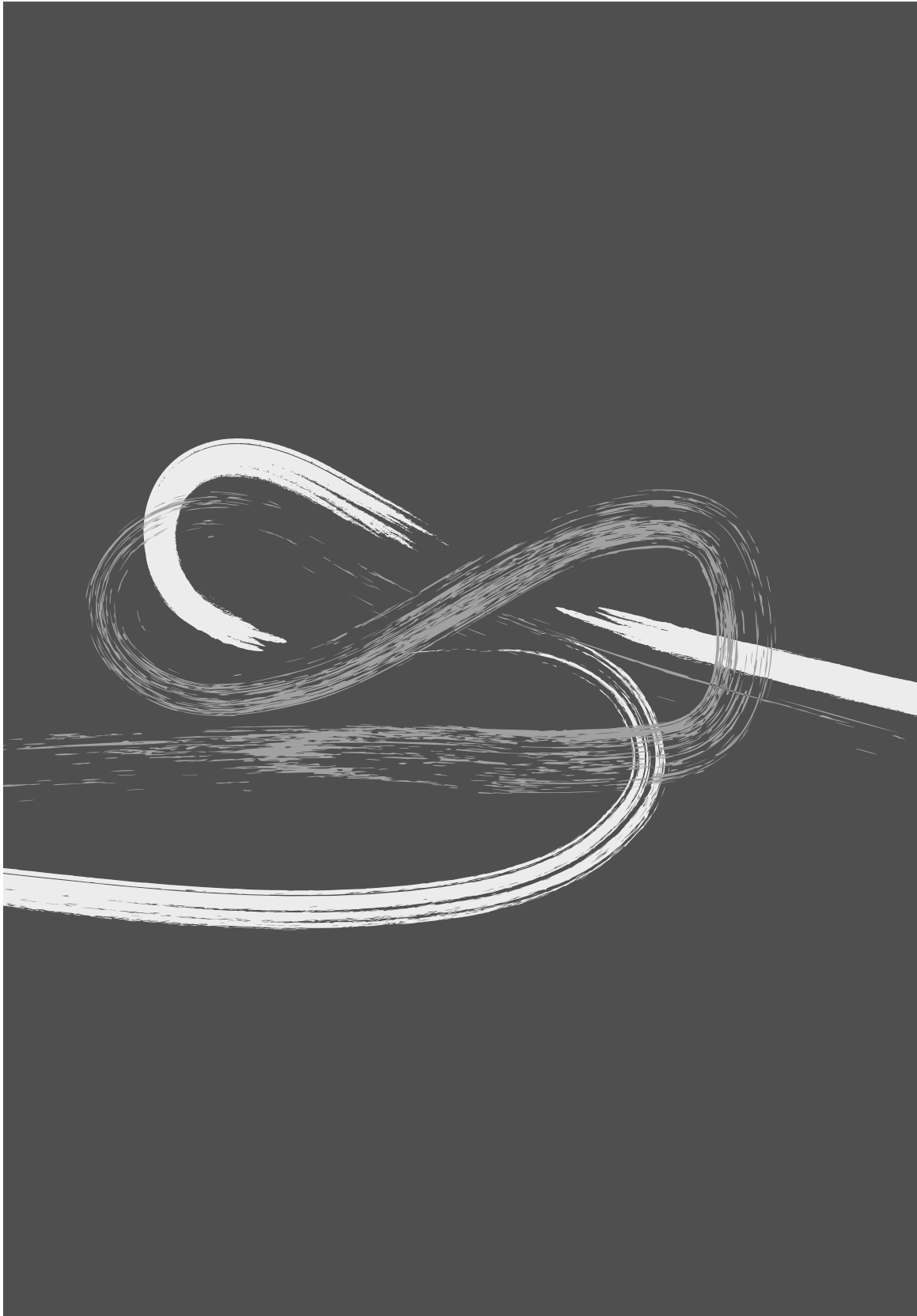
Nicky and Sila

Nicky and Sila Lee

Creators of The Pre-Marriage Course

Session 1

Communication



Session 1 – Communication

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Marriage is a commitment that says, “I’m prepared, not only to spend the rest of my life with you, but to spend the rest of my life finding out about you.

There’s always going to be more of you to discover.”

DR. ROWAN WILLIAMS (FORMER ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY)

It’s only when we get married that we realize that some of our deeply held assumptions about life are not universally shared!

CONVERSATION 1

5 minutes



DIFFERENT EXPECTATIONS

See if you can each identify one difference in your expectations for marriage that you have as a result of your family upbringing or your different cultural backgrounds.

For example: *level of involvement with your wider family; how often you invite visitors to your home; whether you have new or old furniture; whether you throw broken things away or mend them; who does most of the cooking; how you relax.*

Learning to communicate

Communication involves talking and listening effectively.

We are all different in the way we communicate and this is affected by:

- our personality
- our background

1. Our personality

Extrovert

They tend towards processing their thoughts externally. In other words, they tend to think out loud.

Introvert

They tend towards organizing their thoughts in their heads first before they speak.

Analytical

They work things out methodically and may take a long time to make decisions.

Intuitive

They often act on hunches and may jump to conclusions.

Being able to talk openly and honestly about our differences is vital if we're to have a strong marriage.

"I will praise You, because I have been remarkably and wondrously made."

— PSALM 139:14, CSB

CONVERSATION 2

5 minutes



HOW WE COMMUNICATE

Tell your partner how you think their personality affects the way they communicate.

2. Our family background

Some families are quiet, others are much louder.

Some families are more volatile, others are calmer.

Some families take turns to talk, others frequently interrupt.

**Some families air differences immediately;
others may delay or avoid talking about
conflicting views at all.**

CONVERSATION 3

10 minutes



FAMILY STYLES OF COMMUNICATION

Complete the following exercise on your own and then talk about it together. Mark with an "x" where you think your own family comes on the line between the two extremes.

Overall, the communication in my family was:

Indirect |—————| Direct

Vague |—————| Specific

Relaxed |—————| Stressful

Non-confrontational |—————| Confrontational

Closed |—————| Open

Loud |—————| Quiet

Humorous |—————| Serious

Interrupting |—————| Taking turns

How has the way your family communicated when you were growing up affected the way you communicate now as an adult? How different is this to the way your partner's family communicates?

Hindrances to good communication

1. Failing to make time

Set aside time for meaningful conversation on a regular basis.

- plan this time (it doesn't just happen)
- guard this time from distractions and interruptions, such as phones and other screens

Recognize when to drop everything and listen.

What could be the things that prevent you from having time to talk together daily?



2. Failing to talk about our feelings

Some people have to learn how to talk about their feelings as they may have had no role model growing up

- they may find talking about their feelings difficult because of inadequacy, vulnerability, or fear of how the other person will respond
- dare to trust your partner with your feelings

Listen to each other without judging or criticizing.

CONVERSATION 4

10 minutes



EFFECTIVE TALKING

- Take turns to tell each other how you tend to communicate when you're feeling anxious, irritated, or under pressure.
- Are you imitating what you observed growing up?
- Ask your partner how difficult or easy it is for them to talk about their inner thoughts, attitudes, and emotions.
- Find out if they were encouraged to talk about their feelings during their upbringing.

Sharing our innermost thoughts and feelings is essential for building a strong marriage.

3. Failing to listen to each other

Listening is of huge importance for building a foundation of understanding and intimacy in marriage.

Not being listened to is highly damaging to a relationship.

When someone listens to us, we feel:

- understood
- valued
- supported
- loved

Overcome **bad listening habits** such as:

- disengaging
- going off on a tangent
- giving advice
- reassuring
- interrupting

Do you recognize any of these bad listening habits in yourself?



How to listen

It takes patience to learn how to listen effectively.

Listening effectively means:

- allowing our partner to finish what they want to say
- putting aside our own agenda and seeking to see the world through our partner's eyes
- making the effort to understand them when they think or feel differently to us

CONVERSATION 5

15 minutes



EFFECTIVE LISTENING

1. One of you say to your partner, **“Tell me about something that is worrying you.”**

Listen carefully and, when they have finished, reflect back what they have said, particularly about their feelings, to show that you have understood.
If you did not understand, ask your partner to tell you again.

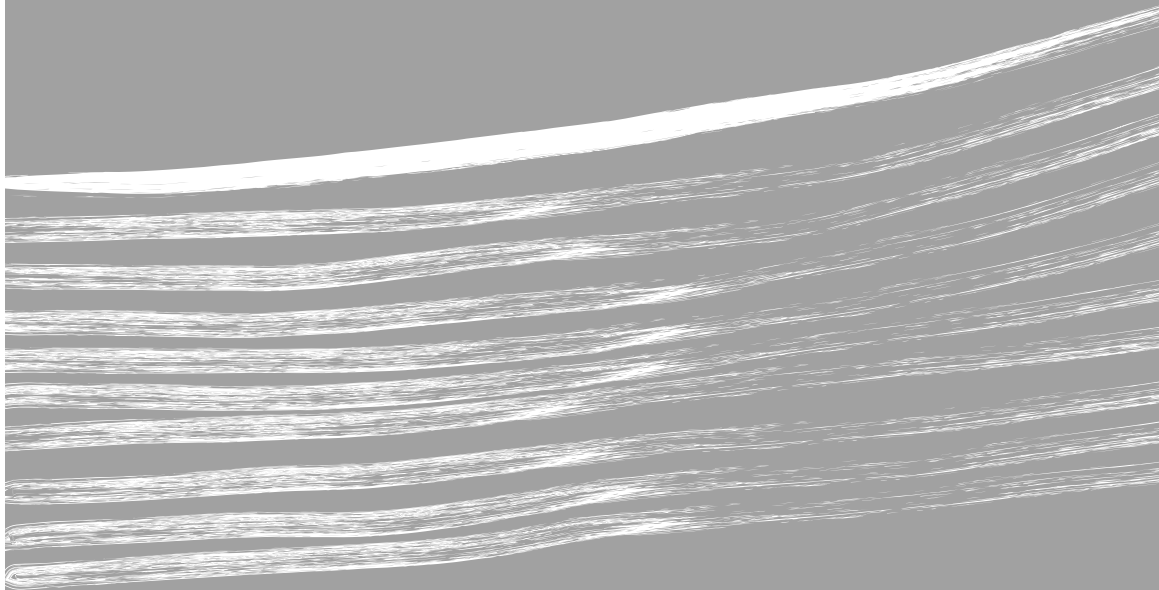
2. Then ask, **“What’s concerning you most about what you’ve told me?”** Reflect back what they have said.

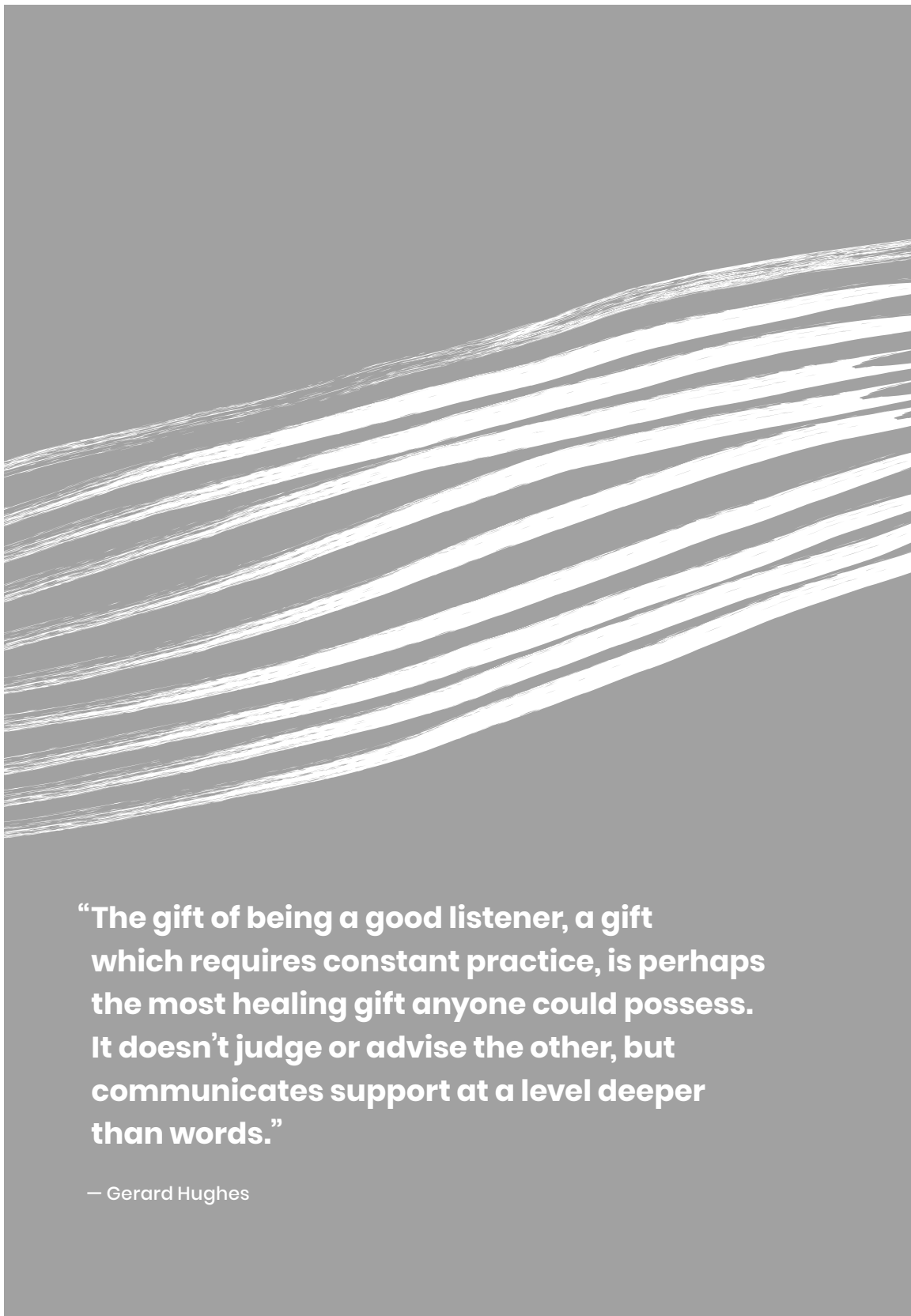
3. Then ask, **“Is there anything you could do (or, if appropriate, you’d like me or us to do) about what you’ve just said?”** Again, reflect back to them what they say.

4. Finally ask, **“Is there anything else you would like to say?”** Reflect back what they have said.

Then swap roles.

Continuing the Conversation





“The gift of being a good listener, a gift which requires constant practice, is perhaps the most healing gift anyone could possess. It doesn’t judge or advise the other, but communicates support at a level deeper than words.”

— Gerard Hughes

Plan a date together



Morning



Afternoon



Evening

<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thurs</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>	<i>Sun</i>

My turn / your turn to organize what we do.

This week, we could.....

Conversation starter on our next date

Ask your partner, "What is the best vacation you have ever been on?"



And, "Where would your dream vacation destination be?"

What are you hoping to gain from the course?



Effective communication



Take some time over the next week to write down your answers to the following questions and then discuss them with your partner.

1. Are you a good listener?

On a rating of 1 to 10 score your ability as a listener:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. How would you rate your partner?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. When have you had the best conversations about your deepest thoughts and emotions?

4. Which times and places are most conducive to good communication?

5. What have been the worst times and places for communicating effectively? Can you work out why?

6. Complete the following: I find it easier to be open and vulnerable with you when you...

This exercise is adapted from *Looking up the Aisle* by Dave and Joyce Ames (*Mission to Marriage*, 1994).