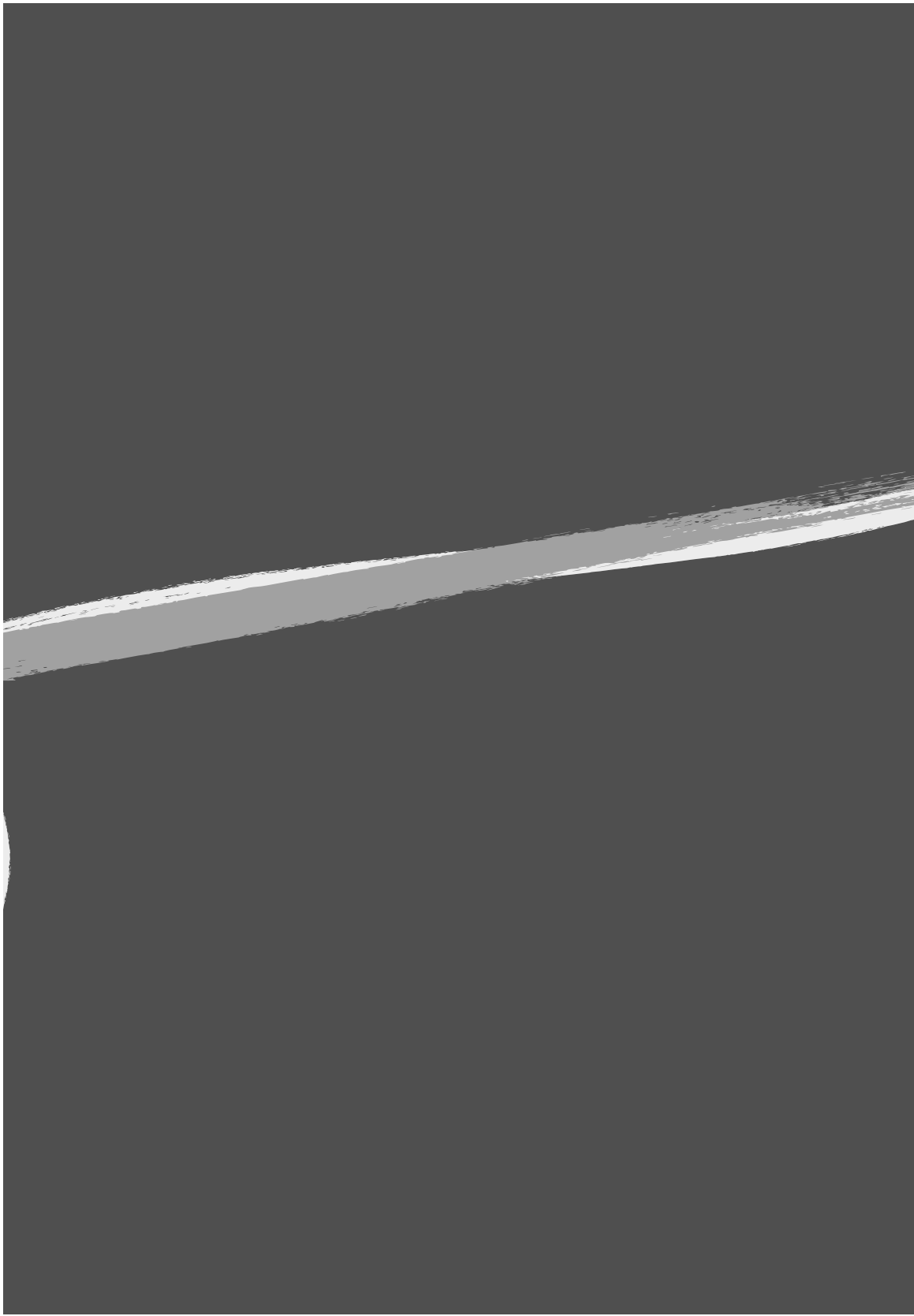


Session 4

Connection





RECAP

- Ask your partner what they found most helpful in Session 3 for your relationship.



Session 4 – Connection

How do we keep our love alive and stay connected over the whole course of a marriage?

Spend time together

Keeping love alive is a deliberate choice. It involves:

- being intentional
- investing in our friendship
- making a daily habit of connecting with each other

Benefits of a weekly date:

- regular opportunity for effective communication
- keeps the romance, love, fun, and friendship alive in our marriage

When we put our screens away and focus our attention on our partner, we're communicating powerfully, "I value you above anyone else."

Tips for planning regular dates:

Try to plan at least two hours every week to do something together you both enjoy

- plan ahead (put them in your calendars for the next 3 months)
- make them different and special, whether you stay in or go out

Make them a priority over other demands

- protect this time from interruptions (friends, family, phone)

Be creative; vary what you do (time and place)

- don't set the bar too high (a date doesn't have to be expensive)

Make use of mealtimes

- put away screens
- make conversation—ask questions your partner will enjoy answering

CONVERSATION 1

10 minutes



BUILDING YOUR FRIENDSHIP

Write a list of six things you enjoy doing together.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Compare what you have written. How could you make sure you are still doing these things together five / ten / fifteen years into marriage?

Discovering your partner's needs

Discovering what makes our partner feel loved builds deeper connection between us and keeps our love growing.

We can be very different to each other in the ways we give and receive love.

The five love languages¹

1. Loving words

2. Thoughtful presents

3. Physical affection

4. Quality time

5. Kind actions

All five ways of expressing love are important in every marriage, but often there will be one or two of them that communicate love in the way we particularly understand it.

Often our partner's love language will be different to ours

- learning to show them love effectively can be like learning a different language
- it takes effort, discipline, and practice

¹ The teaching on the Five Love Languages is adapted from Dr. Gary Chapman's bestselling book, *The 5 Love Languages®: The Secret to Love That Lasts* (© 2015). Published by Northfield Publishing. Used by permission.

CONVERSATION 2

15 minutes



DISCOVERING YOUR LOVE LANGUAGES

Write down six specific occasions on which you have particularly known your partner's love for you.

I have known your love for me when:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Taking into consideration the six examples above, try to put the five ways of showing love in order of importance for you. Then consider which order you would put them in for your partner. When you have both finished, show each other what you have put.

For you Number 1–5 <i>(1 = most important)</i>	Love expressed through:	For your partner Number 1–5 <i>(1 = most important)</i>
	Words	
	Time	
	Presents	
	Touch	
	Actions	

If necessary, correct the column "For your partner" if their answers reveal a different order.

Go online to www.5lovelanguages.com to fill in a short questionnaire to confirm the order of importance of these love languages for you.

Building your sexual relationship

Sex joins us together, not just physically, but emotionally, psychologically, and even spiritually.

Think of your sexual relationship as a journey of discovery over a lifetime.

Good sex is **us-focused**, not me-focused.

How to establish and maintain a pattern of good sex in marriage:

1. Get your hearts in sync

Be ready to talk

- can be difficult as deeply private and requires vulnerability
- tell each other what turns you on and what turns you off
- don't leave it to guesswork

Bring closure to past sexual relationships.

- past relationships can cause jealousy and mistrust
- be honest with each other
- if necessary, disconnect on social media from people you were once attracted to and delete emails / texts / photos
- may need to say sorry to and forgive each other

2. Get your heads straight

Good sex has so much to do with our state of mind

- fill your minds with what is beautiful, honorable, and mutually respectful about sex
- talk about expectations and any fears

Problems resulting from abuse or other sexual trauma from the past may require professional help (ask your course leader for advice)

- If you are struggling in your sexual relationship, don't bury the problem
- talk together
- read a book on sex together (see Appendix 6 for recommended books)
- seek expert help if necessary

Most sexual problems are common and solvable.

Using pornography has a damaging effect psychologically and will impact a couple's sexual relationship negatively. If pornography is an issue in your relationship, have an honest and non-judgmental conversation with your partner. Taking steps to change your habits will have a hugely positive impact on your relationship and will make having good sex a reality in marriage.

Low self esteem and poor body image affect our sexual responses

- build your partner's confidence
- keep admiring each other's body

Sex affects every other part of our marriage relationship and every other part of our marriage affects our sexual intimacy.

CONVERSATION 3

10 minutes



TALKING ABOUT SEX (PART 1)

Complete whichever of the following sentences apply to you and your relationship. Then discuss what you have written with your partner.

Getting your hearts in sync

I am anxious about...

For example: *expectations about sex / feeling vulnerable in talking about sex / a past sexual relationship / family planning / being seen naked*

Getting your head straight

My thinking about sex has been affected by...

For example: *my upbringing / unhelpful messages about sex from... / trauma from the past / low self-esteem / pornography*

3. Get your bodies set

Significant differences between men and women in sexual arousal

- give time for preparation and arousal

Create a climate of trust

- good sex is dependent on allowing other parts of our relationship to develop
- strong connection between giving ourselves to each other in our marriage vows and in our sexual relationship
- practice self-control

Sex is about the giving of our bodies to each other.

60

Four practical tips



1. Plan for sex on a regular basis

- enough to stay closely connected
- be intentional
- make it a priority

2. Make your bedroom special

- make it a space that feels relaxed and safe
- leave phones and screens outside the bedroom

3. Be creative

- talk about what you like or might like together
- avoid getting stuck in a rut
- be imaginative, gentle, and respectful of each other

4. Plan times away alone together

- go away occasionally to a different location

CONVERSATION 4

10 minutes



TALKING ABOUT SEX (PART 2)

Complete the following sentence. Then discuss what you have written with your partner.

Getting your body set

I would like us to talk about...

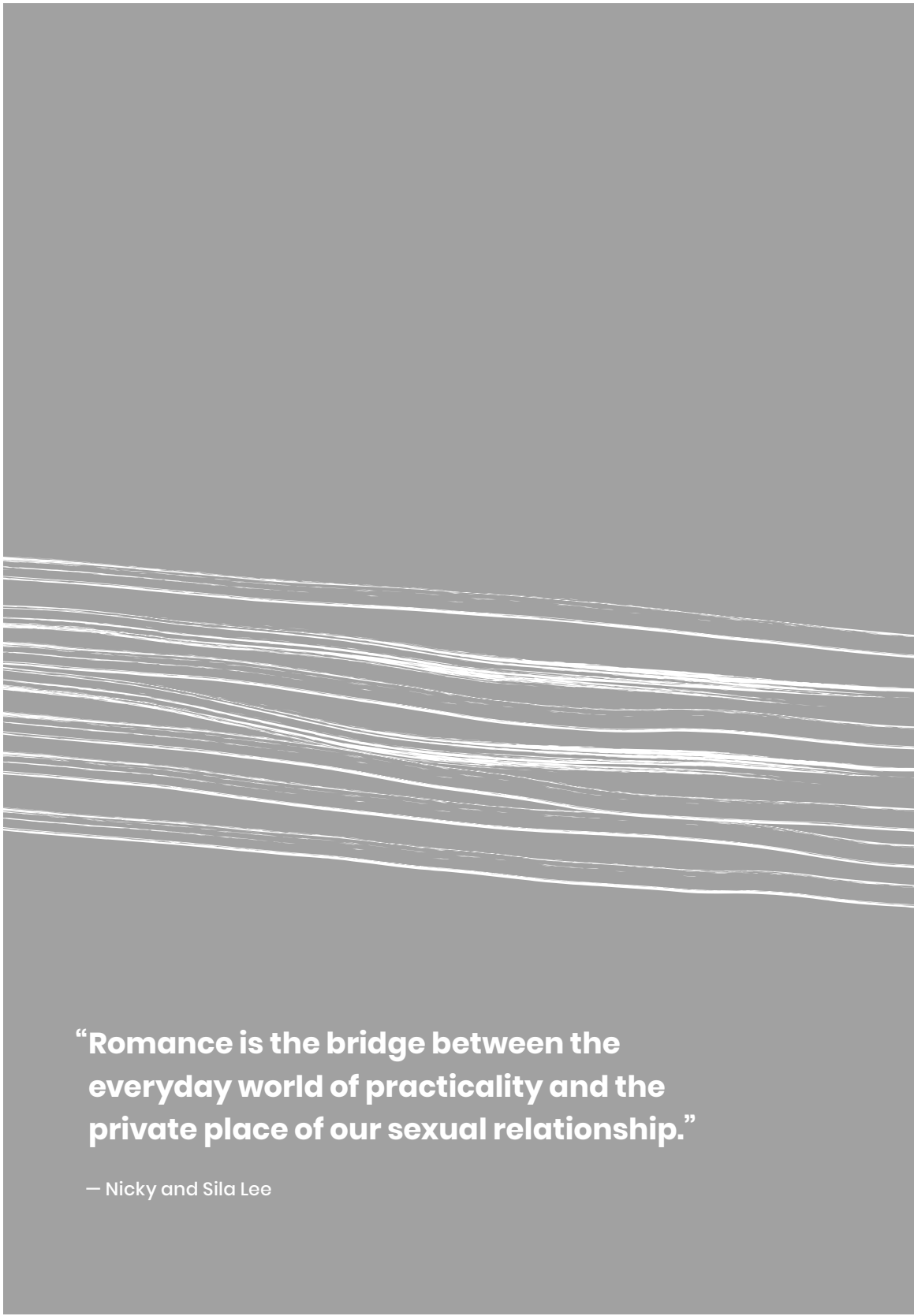
For example: *the different ways we are aroused / keeping sex for marriage / the regularity of sex / our bedroom / being creative in lovemaking*

"Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires."

– SONG OF SOLOMON 2:7; 3:5; 8:4

Continuing the Conversation





**“Romance is the bridge between the
everyday world of practicality and the
private place of our sexual relationship.”**

— Nicky and Sila Lee

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 your next date:



Ask each other, "How much time do you like to spend with others during the week and how much time when it's just the two of us?"

Ask each other, "What does your ideal weekend look like?"



Time apart

Every marriage needs a balance of time together and time apart.

There are two dangers:

1. Too much time apart
2. No space to pursue separate interests

Each write down any individual interests you expect to pursue without your partner:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How frequently and how much time would these take?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Write down any individual interests you expect your partner to pursue without you:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How frequently and how much time might these take?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Now compare and discuss your answers.