



The
BIG 3
Couple's Workbook



The Big Three Couple's Workbook

Overview	<p>Research shows that three main areas of life introduce the most conflict into marriages. These areas are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communication• Intimacy• Money <p>This resource includes three exercises to help you and your partner reflect, discuss, and pursue growth as it pertains to these areas of life and relationships.</p>
Interested in Going Deeper?	<p>For further thriving through <i>The Big Three</i> issues in marriage, visit the Enneagram and Marriage website to sign-up for coaching or get the Release and Relate workbooks!</p>

Part 1: Communication

Background	The first step in modifying behavior is developing the ability to observe your behaviors and actions in real-time. From this awareness comes the ability to reflect and modify.
Objective	Utilize the exercise below as a stepping stone for considering what positive and negative communication habits you are currently employing in your relationship. Use the list of positive communication habits as a launchpad for employing new techniques and practices that will help you connect more deeply and positively with your partner!
Directions	<p>Carefully read through the two lists of habits below. Check the box next to habits you have practiced in your relationship. This exercise is meant to be self-reflective, so don't check boxes for your partner.</p> <p>When you get to the positive communication habits, also denote at least three new positive habits you'd like to integrate into your repertoire of communications skills.</p> <p>If your partner is willing, print out two copies of this exercise and both of you can complete it individually. Discuss your lists as a couple or ask a coach or counselor to debrief your list with you.</p>

Negative Communication Habits

- ☐ You ignoring your partner when s/he is speaking.
- ☐ You stare at your phone while your partner is talking.
- ☐ You don't spend time thoughtfully processing what your partner says.
- ☐ You avoid eye contact frequently.
- ☐ You make large financial decisions without consulting your partner, or if there was a point of divergence in your opinions, you move forward without their blessing.
- ☐ You make vacation plans (for you or the whole family) without consulting your partner.
- ☐ Your tone suggests you are bored.
- ☐ You rarely, if ever, laugh while talking.
- ☐ You don't say anything at all when you're upset and you let the anger and sadness brew inside.
- ☐ You turn to another person or addiction for fulfillment, love, and/or affection.

- ☐ You do not work to improve language barriers in your relationship. *I.e., a bilingual marriage where partners have stopped trying to understand one another.*
- ☐ You say, “Nothing will ever change,” because you have noticed long-term negative themes and patterns in your marriage.
- ☐ You are rudely sarcastic about your partner’s friends, family, or coworkers.
- ☐ You yell, call names, and otherwise insult your partner’s character when you disagree about things.

Positive Communication Habits

- ☐ You wait until your partner is finished speaking before you begin.
- ☐ You smile or laugh when your partner tells you a pleasant story.
- ☐ You ask for clarification before jumping to conclusions.
- ☐ You mirror back what you have heard.
- ☐ You show enthusiasm for your partner’s conversation topics.
- ☐ You use “I” language in conflict.
- ☐ You take a time-out instead of yelling or abusing your partner.
- ☐ You take deep breaths when you’re feeling overwhelmed.
- ☐ You pray for your partner and your marriage, quietly or aloud, during or immediately following conflict.
- ☐ You offer an apology without compromising your integrity or dignity as a human being.
- ☐ You are seeing a counselor or coach who helps you when you get stuck.
- ☐ You ask your partner about their day and listen with curiosity instead of interrupting or “fixing.”
- ☐ You tell your partner when you are upset, but sandwich that between highlights/good things about them.
- ☐ You talk about financial goals together and hold one another accountable for large purchases.
- ☐ You plan vacations out with financial peace and nuclear family harmony in mind.
- ☐ You streamline your ministry so you aren’t giving too much or becoming too frazzled.
- ☐ You talk throughout a conflict and give your partner the benefit of the doubt sometimes by choosing their idea over your own or you find a compromise.
- ☐ You say “I’m sorry” when you have offended your partner, even if it was unintentional.
- ☐ You give your partner space when asked.
- ☐ You are encouraging.
- ☐ You give your partner’s ideas about a situation time to settle in before responding negatively to it.

- ☐ You put the phone down during conversations with your partner.
- ☐ If needed, you use emailing or texting to keep conflict at bay and as a way to implement boundaries for lengthy battles.
- ☐ You journal or call a trusted mentor (someone not attractive to you) who shares your values to process marital conflict in a healthy way.
- ☐ You grab sneakers and run or exercise to release stress.
- ☐ You take a hot bath to soften your emotional intensity.
- ☐ You offer your partner a warm hug every day. (Adding a kiss would be marvelous!)
- ☐ You put down the heavy burdens you carry to just relax and have lighter talks.

Part 2: Intimacy

Background	Intimacy can be an area of marriage that draws a couple close, allows their bodies to be in harmony together, brings deep pleasure, and potentially combines their bodies to procreate. However, it can also bring intense sorrow and pain, awaken trauma, and remind couples of scars in their current or past experiences. This area of couples care is very important for you to pay attention to as an individual and as a couple. It will need time and grace in every case since it isn't always easy, especially across multiple seasons of life and marriage.
Objective	Use the reflection questions below to get more attuned to your preferences regarding intimacy. Utilize the list as an opportunity to practice open and honest communication with your partner. Practice deep listening when your partner shares their preferences. Use both of your responses as a starting place for creating a deeper connection and joy surrounding intimacy in your relationship.
Directions	<p>First, allow each partner time to read through the questions below. Reflect mentally or via writing.</p> <p>Next, use this list as a starting point for your intimacy talks. Find a time when you are both comfortable to share your thoughts or written reflections with one another.</p>

Intimacy Reflection Questions

- How many times a week will we ideally be intimate?
- What time(s) of the day, week, or season are generally best for our sex life?

- In this season of life, what are our practical, physical needs during, before, and after intimacy?
- What do we need to get our bodies and space comfortable and prepared for intimacy? *I.e., lotions, towels, scents, music, neatness, showers?*
- How much time will intimacy take?
- When can we schedule sex so we don't miss it or forget to prioritize it in our relationship?
- How do kids (or the desire for children) factor into disrupting our sexual life, if at all?

- How do our hormonal cycles and/or pregnancies affect our sex life?
- What are our favorite positions? (Hint: Trade back and forth!)
- What do we like to do after being intimate?
- What are the negative triggers for both of us?
- What are positive triggers for us, both individually and as a couple?

Part 3: LET'S BUDGET!

Background	<p>Personal finances can be complicated, and this complexity only grows when you add another person's income, preferences, and habits to the mix!</p> <p>Finances are considered one of the leading causes of divorce, so it's essential that you and your partner get on the same page regarding this area of life.</p> <p>A budget is a key component of personal finance and an essential tool in maintaining marital harmony regarding money. A zero-based budget is a budget where the income minus expenses equals zero. Use the exercise below to create your zero-based budget.</p>
Objective	<p>Use the exercise below to gain a greater awareness of where your money is going, if your spending aligns with your values, and if you and your partner are on the same page regarding your monthly budget.</p>
Directions	<p>Use this list as a starting point or refresher for discussing money with your partner.</p> <p>Step 1: Add up your income</p> <p>Step 2: Add up your expenses. Begin with what financial expert Dave Ramsey refers to as the "four walls." This includes food, shelter, basic clothing, and basic transportation. From there, add in other wants and needs.</p> <p>Step 3: Ensure your income minus expenses equals zero. If step 3 does not yield zero, work with your partner to adjust your budget and make a plan to work toward a zero-based budget.</p> <p>PS: Don't forget yourself and your desires as well as those of your partner!</p> <p>Note: Everyone's budget is unique. Use the categories and breakdown here as a starting place, but don't feel limited by the format. If you'd like, write your budget on a piece of paper, spreadsheet, or look into some of the online budgeting resources listed below.</p>
Additional Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• YNAB: Personal Budgeting Software

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ramsey Solutions • Quicken
--	---

Step 1: Add Up Your Monthly Income	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income source 1: • Income source 2: • Income source 3: • Income source 4: 	Total Monthly Income: \$

Step 2: Add Up Your Spending		
Budget Categories	Breakdown of Category	Sub-total for monthly spending:
Charitable Giving	Tithes: Other:	\$
Savings	Emergency fund: Long-term goals: Other:	\$
Housing	Rent/mortgage: Home repairs: Yard maintenance: Other:	\$
Food	Grocery: Restaurants: Other:	\$
Utilities	Electric: Gas: Internet: Phone service: Other:	\$
Children	Child care: Birthday parties: Activities such as sports/arts: Other:	\$
Transportation	Gas:	\$

	Repairs: Public transit: Other:	
Personal	Toiletries: Self-Care: Other:	\$
Health	Medical care: Medications: Other:	\$
Insurance	Car: Home: Life: Other: <i>Note: Life insurance is essential.</i>	\$
Fun	Date nights: Vacations: Quarterly fun events: Other:	\$
Miscellaneous	Misc 1: Misc 2:	\$
TOTAL SPENDING: \$		

Step 3: Is it a Zero-Based Budget?

Total Income (\$) - Total Spending (\$) = ZERO

Concluding Note and Next Steps

If your expenses are currently more than your income, you'll have to work together and compromise about money.

If one or both of you are stuck, I suggest you talk to someone who is gifted in the financial area that you both respect, start listening to the Dave Ramsey podcast (together or on your own individually), and then come back together to talk about it.

You can also find a neutral third party such as a pastor or a counselor or coach. Click [here](#) to connect with an Enneagram and Marriage coach!