

Value

Value and respect the positive aspects of your partner and your relationship



Objectives

- Understand how showing kindness, understanding, respect, and caring can help couples create and maintain stable, healthy relationships.
- Understand the importance of focusing on positive characteristics of partners within a relationship.
- Identify relationship-building activities and resources to help individuals and couples demonstrate care in their relationships.

Background Reading for Facilitator

- NERMEM Chapter – *Care: Using Nurturing, Caring, and Affectionate Behaviors*

Facilitator Materials

- Two pads of standard sticky notes
- Participant workbook materials (1 tip sheet; 4 worksheets)
- Timer for pulse count
- Relationship Wheel

Participant Workbook

- Tip Sheet: *Showing Affection and Respect* – p. 33-34
- Worksheet: *Name the Ways You Care* – p. 35
- Worksheet: *Caring in Action* – p. 36
- Worksheet: *Appreciating the Positive* – p. 37
- Worksheet: *Caring Actions, Not Crabby Reactions* – p. 38

Session Overview at a Glance

- Mindfulness practice: Loving-kindness (Slides 1 & 2)
- Introduction to “Value” (Slide 3)
- Maintaining positivity in the relationship (Slides 4-6)
- Crabby reactions vs. caring actions (Slides 7 & 8)
- Summary and action plan (Slide 9)

60-90 Minutes

6-8 Minutes

2 Minutes

25-42 Minutes

22-30 Minutes

5-8 Minutes

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VALUE

Mindfulness Practice: Loving Kindness



May you be filled with loving-kindness;
May you be well;
May you be blessed;
May you feel peace; balance, and forgiveness;
May you be happy.

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MINDFULNESS PRACTICE



Loving-Kindness

Loving-kindness is a meditation practice to develop the mental habit of selfless or altruistic love. It is hard to feel hatred while feeling loving kindness and it dissipates when we focus on these types of positive feelings.

The practice brings about positive attitudinal changes and develops a 'loving-acceptance,' a way of healing the negative mind.

VIRTUAL ADAPTATION



Loving-Kindness – See p.111 in *Adaptations for Virtual Delivery* guide.

Before we get started with the next topic, let's take another opportunity to reinforce the heart-brain connection. In this activity we will begin with a loving acceptance of yourself and then we will have you focus these feelings and wishes towards your loved one. Doing this often will support a loving and positive relationship.

Activity (Loving-Kindness – 2-3 Minutes)

[Read the following instructions to the participants, pausing momentarily between each step.]

1. Close your eyes and find a comfortable sitting position.
2. Just breathe normally, relax, and disengage from stressful feelings and thoughts.
3. Shift your attention to your breathing. Breathe deeply in-and-out. Do not worry if one breath is deeper than another, just focus on the breathing.
4. If your mind wanders away from your focused breathing, don't worry. Just bring your attention back to your breathing.
5. [After 30 seconds of breathing, in a soft and relaxing tone] As you continue to focus on your breathing, repeat this thought to yourself:
 - May I be filled with loving-kindness,
 - May I be well,
 - May I be blessed,
 - May I feel peace, balance, and forgiveness,
 - May I be happy.
6. [After 30 seconds, in a soft and relaxing tone] Now repeat the same thought but this time, instead of I, fill in the blank saying your partner's name:
 - May [my partner] be filled with loving-kindness,
 - May [my partner] be well,
 - May [my partner] be blessed,
 - May [my partner] feel peace, balance, and forgiveness,
 - May [my partner] be happy.
7. [After 30 seconds] When you feel comfortable, open your eyes and slowly become aware of your surroundings.

Ask: In this quiet moment, would anyone like to share what he or she thinks of this activity?

This starting practice of viewing our partner positively is the theme of this section in which we'll discuss and practice another key way you *individually* show support for your partner and the relationship. Before we move on, let's see how this helped your heart.



Activity (*Take Your Pulse*)

- Have participants take their pulse for 15 seconds using one of the methods illustrated on **Slide 2**.
- Use a timer and announce "start" and then "stop" (after 15 seconds pass) so that participants can focus on just counting their heart beats/pulses.
- On **page 4** in their workbook, have participants record pulse count (in **the next available row**) and multiply that count by four to compute their heart rate per minute.

Ask: How is everyone doing? Are you finding that your heart rate is consistent and calm?

Ok, let's move on.

VALUE
Take Your Pulse
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KEY POINT


Participants will take a third pulse rating and compare it to their first one in order to see how the mindfulness practice may have helped them physiologically.

So far in the program, we have explored ways to strengthen your commitment and the intimacy in your relationship. This involves reinforcing the ways we think and feel about our partner and the relationship. And it involves doing things that show our partner that we are committed and want to maintain a shared understanding. Now let's explore ways to build from those efforts to show we care for, respect, and value our partner.


Ask: How many of you are familiar with the "Golden Rule"? What is the "Golden Rule"?

Much like the "Golden Rule," we do unto our partner as we would have our partner do unto us. In other words, we act and behave in kind and caring ways that show our partner support, respect, and appreciation. Sometimes this may involve doing things for our partner even when our partner, for whatever reason, does not do the same (right away) in return. We value our relationship by showing our partner that we value him or her.


VALUE
Elevate
3




EMPOWER YOURSELF




LAY THE FOUNDATION




ENLIGHTEN




VALUE



ATTACH



TAME



ENGAGE

KEY POINT

Expressing value for your partner through support, respect, and appreciation can have a positive impact on your relationship.

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VALUE

Value your partner...even when it's hard!



What are
some
ways that
you show
you care?

**KEY POINT**

It is important to find ways to show your partner that you care. This can be done in many ways. It is equally important to communicate about how love is expressed in your relationship.

**WORKBOOK****Name the Ways You Care, p. 35.**

Objective: identify ways in which they and their partner express caring for one another.

**SPECIAL NOTE**

Be sure to explain that this activity is designed to recognize and value the different ways that love is expressed rather than a competition to see who shows love more.



One of the important differences between happy and unhappy couples is that happy couples focus more on the positive aspects of their relationship. For example, it's important to regularly notice the good things your partner does for you, *and* to express appreciation for those good things. As we learned earlier today, when we are crowded by stress it can be hard to show that we care. Fortunately, there are many ways to show you care for each other. Some of those ways require more effort than others, and some are very simple things to do or say. [*Consider sharing a personal example of how you and your own partner show care.*] Let's take a moment to recognize the many ways you show care in your relationships.

Activity (*Name the Ways You Care*)

- Provide participants about three minutes to fill out the worksheet on **page 35** individually. Encourage each person to list the ways they show care to their partner and the ways their partner shows care.
- Ask each couple to take about five minutes sharing their responses with their partner. Encourage each partner to share a story about one of the examples they listed under "ways that your partner shows he or she cares about you."

Ask: As you compared your worksheets, did you find that you came up with similar examples? Did you identify ways that you and/or your partner show you care that you did not previously recognize? Would anyone like to share with the group?

It can be hard sometimes to see or know when our partner is showing love. Each of us has a different way of showing and expressing love. For example, some of us prefer to express love through words, others through action. There are also other ways. One relationship expert, Dr. Gary Chapman, refers to several "love languages" and emphasizes that often couples don't share the same love language. These differences can cause trouble from time to time when one partner doesn't recognize the other's efforts to show love or doesn't show love in a way the partner prefers to be loved. [*Refer back to the concept of shared meaning from Enlighten module.*]

Ask: What do you think will happen to your relationship if you regularly do things to show you value your partner and the relationship as well as recognize your partner's efforts to show he or she values you and the relationship?

Relationship researcher Dr. John Gottman has found that the stability of a marriage can be determined by the ratio of positive to negative behaviors and experiences shared in the relationship. It comes down to a simple mathematical ratio of five positives for every one negative! In fact, this concept can apply to all types of relationships (e.g., parent-child, sibling, co-workers, friends).

Negative interactions have a strong influence on relationships – they can inflict more pain and cause more damage to the relationship than positive interactions. As such, we need to invest in and build a “reserve” of positives in our relationships to withstand the harmful effects of just one negative. Dr. Gottman refers to this as filling up our “love bank” or making regular deposits in our “emotional bank account” of all those positive thoughts and experiences. When you maintain or increase your efforts to value your partner and show care in small, daily ways, you create “habits of interaction.” Dr. Gottman also finds that when couples have an overwhelming amount of positive “habits” in their relationship, they more naturally handle their arguments with more respect and care for each other.

In your workbook, turn to the *Caring in Action* worksheet on **page 36**. As a way to continue to acknowledge ways you each care for one another, consider setting aside time each day to do this activity. Making regular deposits into your container each day is a reminder of those positive thoughts and experiences you and your partner are making into your “emotional bank account.” And, remember, as noted at the bottom of page 36 in your workbook, it's not a competition. Some days one partner may show more care for the other. Use this exercise as a reminder to show care and appreciation for each other.

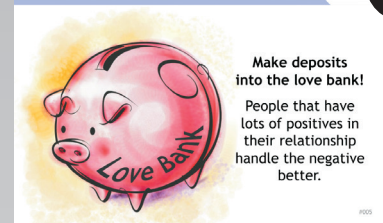
[If you have at least seven minutes (e.g., you are delivering the 90-minute version of the module), walk couples through the “Caring in Action” worksheet on page 36. Bring your own containers to show couples a visual example. Ask each participant to write their first notes in class. First, have them write 1-2 ways they showed love to their partner today. Next, have them write 1-2 ways their partner showed love to them today. When done, ask participants to use the remaining time to share what they wrote with their partner (or reflect individually if there is no partner present). Close by reminding couples to be intentional in their efforts to make time and do this each day.]

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Maintain Positivity In Your Relationship



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KEY POINT

A relationship that has more positive interactions compared to negative interactions (5:1) will be more stable.



WORKBOOK

Caring in Action, p. 36.

Objective: identify different ways they show and express love in their relationship and learn to recognize their partner's different ways of expressing love.



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Appreciating the Positive



What has your partner done today that you appreciate?



KEY POINT

Expressing appreciation is a good way to increase positive interactions.



WORKBOOK

Appreciating the Positive, p. 37.

Objective: Clients will identify, focus on, and communicate about positive qualities of their partner.



SPECIAL NOTE

There is a worksheet called "Appreciating the Positive" included in the participant workbook, but this will not be filled out as a part of the activity on this page. It can be filled out at home.



If a participant does not have a partner present, they can share a note with the facilitator. The facilitator should write a note to that person as well.

Earlier in the program, you shared with each other strengths you see in each other and positive moments in your past. Today, you are creating new positive experiences. What do you appreciate about what your partner has done for you and the relationship today?

Activity (Appreciating the Positive)

- Provide participants with an index card or sticky note and ask them to write one thing their partner has done today that they appreciate.
- Ask them to share the sticky note with their partner, and then save it in their workbook, or they may choose to put it on their partner as a sort of "badge" demonstrating publicly their kindness.

Ask: How did reading or hearing that make you feel?

Remembering and celebrating those things is important to keeping the "love tank or account" full. In your workbook, on **page 37**, we have provided a worksheet to help you continue your efforts to *appreciate the positives*. Take time throughout your relationship to value each other regularly.

Ask: What are suggestions for how you could do this every day? [Try to get some concrete suggestions.]

[If you have at least five minutes (e.g., you are delivering the 90-minute version of the module), walk couples through the "Appreciating the Positive" worksheet on page 37. Ask each participant to check each characteristic they really like about their partner; encourage them to write in other characteristics not listed. When done, ask participants to use the remaining time to share what they checked (and wrote) with their partner (or reflect individually if there is no partner present).]

Showing our partner that we value him or her, is also reflected in how we express ourselves. When we say things that are caring and positive, we make “deposits” into our relationship bank accounts. But, when we say or do things in a way that hurts our partner, we are making “withdrawals.” Sometimes the stress of life (even through our efforts to manage that stress) makes it hard to always be positive.

What’s it like when you or your partner comes home crabby, tired or stressed? To get you thinking about this, let me share a brief story with you:

Shawn picked up his two young kids from childcare and arrived home from work late. It was almost 6:00 pm, and his wife, Karen, would be there any minute. He wanted to make her favorite meal because she had been working in another town on a construction project on weekends for the past 5 months. Their tradition on Mondays was to celebrate together by having a special dinner. He loved having everything ready before she walked through the door, but now he only had 15 more minutes.

At 6:00 pm Karen was getting closer to home, but was getting frustrated because she was hitting all of the red lights. At 6:15 pm she parked and gave a quick honk of the horn, signaling to Shawn that she was home. She let out a long sigh as she headed up the driveway, anxious to see Shawn and starving for her traditional welcome-home meal.

She opened the door, hung up her coat, and called out: “Hey Shawn.” He called back, “Hi Hon” from the kitchen. She heard their baby crying in the living room and saw their 3-year-old son watching TV. She glanced around the corner into the kitchen and saw a half-set table and no food, but heard Shawn putting something in the microwave.

Ask: What might a normal reaction be like in this situation? What would a “caring” reaction look like? Do you have a choice?

I’ll finish the story: She broke into a big smile and said, “It looks like I got home just in time to help! What can I do?”

VALUE

But I am stressed and I feel crabby...



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How do we react to stressful family situations?

KEY POINT



Being conscious of how we communicate with our partner, even when stressed, can help us to make deposits into our relationship bank account rather than withdrawals.

SPECIAL NOTE



This scenario was intentionally written to prevent gender stereotyping. However, depending on your audience, feel free to reverse the roles in this scenario if you choose.

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VALUE

Crabby Reaction OR Caring Action?



Loving Action



Crabby Reaction?



KEY POINT

Caring responses are more helpful than crabby responses, but it can take practice and intention to respond positively. It becomes more natural the more you practice.



WORKBOOK

Caring Actions, Not Crabby Reactions, p. 38.

Objective: participants will understand the difference between caring actions and crabby reactions and be able to identify examples of both.



SPECIAL NOTE

For participants that do not have a partner present, ask them to fill out the worksheet on their own. Check in with those individuals to see if they would like to process their responses with you. Encourage them to review the worksheet with their partner at home.



A crabby reaction is often a cutting remark. Crabby reactions are a natural response under stress, but they are not very helpful. Let's take a look at a few examples and practice what you could do instead.

Activity (*Caring Actions, Not Crabby Reactions*)

- Ask for volunteers to read the two examples at the top of the worksheet on **page 38**.
- Provide participants about six minutes to fill out the worksheet together. Encourage them to come up with both crabby reactions and caring actions to each of the three scenarios.
- Ask for volunteers to share their responses.

Ask:

- Did you find it was easier to come up with crabby reactions or caring actions? [*Expectation is that they will say crabby reactions.*] Why do you think this was so?
- What do you feel you can do to make sure you practice caring actions?

As you can see, a caring action requires more to pause and think about the situation before saying or doing anything. Like we discussed earlier, this can be really hard when your emotions and heart rate are elevated. Still, it is possible to choose to stay positive, even when we're feeling irritable and angry and tempted to be crabby. For some, more than others, this takes practice. You can even use the mindful practices we have been doing to help you remain calm, refocus your attention, and respond in a caring way.

Like we discussed earlier – it requires being *intentional*. With each positive interaction you are making a deposit into the relationship bank account and investing more in your relationship.

Individuals can learn to demonstrate care toward their partners through expressing value and taking a positive approach to communication even in stressful situations. This requires intentional effort and practice. Taking time to work on developing these skills can make a relationship stronger.

Cultivating positivity and appreciation may be one of the most important contributors to the well-being of a relationship. Happy, healthy couples engage in significantly more positive interactions than negative interactions in order to keep their relationship bank accounts full.

Take a look at your **Relationship Wheel** [or refer to **page 7** in the workbook if you do not have wheels] and remember to ask yourself these questions on a regular basis:

- Am I being kind to and appreciating my partner?
- Am I present and available to my partner?
- Am I open with my partner and do I listen?
- Do I try to see my partner's point of view?
- Do I accept and value differences we have?
- Do I look for the good in my partner?

You'll notice on your **Relationship Wheel** (or **page 7** in your workbook), it is important to make time for togetherness. Making time to be together is something you each take responsibility for. This shows your partner that you value your time together. It is also important that you make the most of that time together. Quality time matters as much, if not more, than how much time you spend together. We are going to discuss how to do this in the next session.

So, what do you plan to do to show your partner you value him or her? Take a moment and write at least one new thing you plan to do down in your workbook on **page 2**.

[As participants complete their action plan, review the flip chart listing the participants' expectations (from Introduction). Check-off each topic that was addressed.]

Action Plan

- ✓ What are you currently doing to cultivate positive interactions with your partner?
- ✓ What is one thing that you plan to do in the future?



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KEY POINT

Healthy relationships and marriages require we regularly show our partner that we value him or her and the relationship.



WORKBOOK

My Action Plan, p. 2.

Objective: encourage participants to document at least two new things (per module) they will try to do.



VIRTUAL ADAPTATION



Action Plan – See p.111 in *Adaptations for Virtual Delivery* guide.

NOTES

[illegible]