

Attach

Cultivating and maintaining friendship with your partner



Objectives

- Understand the value of developing and maintaining a close friendship as a part of a healthy relationship.
- Develop an ability to provide understanding and create opportunities to foster a shared sense of couple identity.
- Identify strategies to create meaningful couple time that fosters friendship.

Background Reading for Facilitator

- NERMEN Chapter – *Share: Developing and Maintaining a Couple Identity*

Facilitator Materials

- Flip chart or writing board and markers
- Participant workbook materials (2 tip sheets; 3 worksheets)
- Video: *We've Lost that Lovin' Feeling – Part 1* (1:28 min.)
- Video: *We've Lost that Lovin' Feeling – Part 2* (0:39 sec.)
- Video: *It's Not about the Nail* (1:42 min.)
- Optional Video: *Coca-Cola Social Media Guard* (1:49 min.)
- Optional Video (Virtual Program): *The Importance of Nonverbal Cues as Told by Friends* (4:32 min.)
- Relationship Wheel

Participant Workbook

- Tip Sheet: *Develop and Maintain Your Friendship* – p. 39-40
- Tip Sheet: *Making Time to Connect* – p. 41
- Worksheet: *Ways We Like to Share* – p. 42
- Worksheet: *Couple Rituals and Traditions* – p. 43
- Worksheet: *Bids for Connection* – p. 44

Session Overview at a Glance

- Introduction to "Attach" (Slides 1 & 2)
- Spending meaningful time together (Slides 3 & 4)
- Making and protecting time (Slides 5 & 6)
- Nurturing your couple identity (Slide 7)
- Nurturing positive interactions (Slides 8-15)
- Helpful versus unhelpful messages (Slides 16-20)
- Summary and action plan (Slide 21)

60-90 Minutes

- 3-5 Minutes
- 12-15 Minutes
- 12-15 Minutes
- 4-9 Minutes
- 11-17 Minutes
- 16-24 Minutes
- 2-5 Minutes

1

ATTACH



[Optional: If you are teaching the 90-minute module version, start the class with a 1-2 minute mindfulness practice. This will reinforce the opening message of “caring for your own health” and could be a helpful way to get all of your couples to be present, in the moment, and focused on what they are about to learn. It can also provide additional practice to develop this helpful skill!]

2

ATTACH

3 Critical Elements of Building Friendship



- ✓ Spend meaningful time together
- ✓ Build couple identity
- ✓ Nurture positive interactions

KEY POINT

Make the effort to build and maintain friendship with your partner to sustain your relationship over time.



VIRTUAL ADAPTATION



Icebreaker: Guess that Phrase (New Virtual Activity) – See p.112 in *Adaptations for Virtual Delivery* guide.

So far, we have focused on ways you can strengthen your relationship by caring for your own health. By making choices that demonstrate your commitment to the relationship, understanding your partner's world, and showing care to your partner, you foster positive emotions in your relationship. Now, we are going to focus on ways you can maintain your attachment, or friendship, to each other.

Strong friendship should be the foundation of all committed couple relationships. Yes, romance is important too, but romantic, passionate feelings tend to fluctuate whereas friendship bonds in healthy relationships tend to be steadier over time.

[Advance to Slide 2] Friendships in couple relationships are built on couples spending meaningful time together, finding ways to foster their identity (who they are) as a couple, and nurturing positive interactions with each other. We will review what these three elements of friendship look like and what you can both do to maintain your attachment to each other.

Let's look first at spending meaningful time together.

Ask: Take a look at the quote on this slide. What does it mean to you?

It is important to make time for things that you enjoy so that they won't go undone.

When you first met, you likely did a variety of things together so that you could get to know each other better and to discover your common interests. Over time, as we get busy with work, household tasks, and taking care of kids or other family needs, we spend less time nurturing the relationship. But, no matter how long you have been together, finding ways to spend meaningful time together is important for maintaining your connection to each other.

Ask:

- What are some of the ways you like to spend your time together? [*Write ideas shared on board/flip chart.*]
- Are these activities things you both like to do, or are some of them things one partner likes to do more than the other?

Clearly, there are many things a couple can do together. And, some of these activities may require more time than others.

It's important to understand that the quantity of time you spend doing an activity is not as important as the quality of your interactions during that activity. For example, take a look at **page 41** of your workbook. As you can see here, just a few minutes each day adds up to a lot of quality time during the week! For example, sharing a meal together and sharing moments with lots of humor and positive emotion are bonding experiences that promote friendship.

We will talk more about fostering positive interactions in a bit. For now, I want to give you some time to explore more ways you can spend time together.



KEY POINT

Spending meaningful time together can strengthen your relationship.



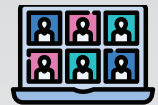
WORKBOOK

Making Time to Connect, p. 41. Objective: illustrate how a few moments of time throughout the day and week add up to lots of quality time.



VIRTUAL ADAPTATION

Ask: Ways You Spend Time Together? – See p.113 in *Adaptations for Virtual Delivery* guide.



4

ATTACH
Spending Time Together

In what ways
do you like to
share with
your partner?

**KEY POINT**

Take time to share
ways that you like to
share with your partner.

**WORKBOOK****Ways We Like to
Share, p. 42.**

Objective: identify individual
and shared interests and
activities that they can do
together to strengthen their
relationship.

**SPECIAL NOTE**

If you have individuals
whose partner is not present,
encourage them to reflect on
ways their partner might fill in
this sheet. Recommend that
they complete this worksheet
with their partner at home.

Do not pressure participants
to share their responses to the
group. This should always be
voluntary.

**Activity** (*Ways we Like to Share*)

- Provide participants about three minutes to fill out the worksheet on **page 42** individually. Encourage each person to list the activities they enjoy, their partner enjoys, and they both enjoy.
- Ask each couple to take about four minutes sharing their responses with their partner. Encourage couples to respect what their partner likes to do (and doesn't like to do) and to focus on those activities they share common interest in doing.

Ask:

- As you compared your worksheets, did you find that you came up with similar examples?
- Did you find any activities one of you thought the other did not like, but he/she actually did? Or thought they liked, but don't actually?
- Would anyone like to share with the group?

There may be many things that you enjoy doing together, but there may also be things that one of you like that the other does not. This is a great place to make a compromise. You may find that it really pays off for your relationship when you do something with your partner that you do not typically enjoy in order to spend time together.

Fortunately, there are many things we can do with our partner that do not require a lot of time.

But, making the time to do many of the activities on your list can sometimes be challenging. It is easy to understand how day-to-day life and responsibilities can interfere with how much energy and time we commit to our relationship. In this video, we will see a couple who is experiencing these challenges. Let's take a look...

Video: *We've Lost that Lovin' Feeling – Part 1*

Ask:

- Clearly, she does not seem happy. What are some of the things that seem to be interfering with this couple bonding?
- What are some other things you feel might get in the way of you spending meaningful time together?

[Write examples on flip chart. Examples may include: work, children, over-scheduling, conflicting schedules, personal hobbies, television, mobile devices, social media.]



KEY POINT

Identifying and overcoming challenges to spending time together as a couple can be helpful.



VIDEO

We've Lost that Lovin' Feeling – Part 1
(1:28 MINUTES)

Download from
www.nermen.org/ELEVATE.php



SPECIAL NOTE

Each family has different personal and cultural values. For some families, spending time together may involve the children as well. Be sensitive to not exclude family time as a togetherness activity.

Also, if *premarital* couples are in your class, the video may or may not connect with them since this drifting apart tends to occur over time. However, new relationships may face interferences from routines individuals had when they were single. Ask a prompt question about this if applicable to your class.



6

ATTACH

Distractions to Spending Time Together



KEY POINT

It can be helpful to identify things that get in the way of spending special time together in order to develop ways to overcome them.



VIDEO

We've Lost that Lovin' Feeling – Part 2
(0.39 SECONDS)



Download from
www.nermen.org/ELEVATE.php

Let's take a few minutes to look again at those activities on your worksheet that you wrote down as things you *both* like to do together.

Activity (*Protecting Time Together*)

- Choose at least one activity that you both really want to do more of together, but find it is harder to do than the other activities on your list.
- Explore things that tend to get in the way of doing those activities.
- Brainstorm ways you can work together to address those challenges and make time to do those activities.

Ask: What ideas did you come up with to make and protect your time for each other?

[Note, the purpose of sharing these ideas is so that other couples may hear and consider options they may not have thought of or tried before.]

These are some great ideas! Let's revisit our couple from the video to see if they apply any of these ideas, or maybe offer another strategy for making and protecting couple time.

Video: *We've Lost that Lovin' Feeling – Part 2*

As you saw, time together can be as simple as going to the grocery store together. Importantly, *making* time for each other – turning towards rather than away from each other – requires effort and intentionality.

When you protect your time for each other, you are reinforcing that you, as a couple, matter. You are not only finding ways to maintain your friendship, you are strengthening your identity as a couple. Another way to foster your couple identity (e.g., “us” and “we”), and enrich your friendship, is to maintain and create rituals and traditions in your relationship.

The way you do things together becomes your couple (or family) traditions. There are three types of traditions you can recognize: celebration traditions (built around special occasions like birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays), family traditions (special things created within each family to fit their lifestyle, like vacations or “movie nights”), and rituals (like bed time routines or saying “I love you” every morning).

What are some of your traditions and rituals? To help you explore those, we have included a worksheet named *Couple Rituals and Traditions* in your workbook on **page 43**. Take some time after the workshop to complete this individually and then come together to share your responses. Be sure to talk about:


- Traditions/rituals you have that maybe one of you was not aware of.
- Things you do that you plan to continue doing.
- And, new traditions/rituals that you want to try.


As you continue your traditions and rituals and as you create new ones, be mindful of the outside influences you identified earlier that could hinder you from strengthening your couple identity. Work together to address those obstacles and to make those things that you both want to happen.


[If you have at least five minutes (e.g., you are delivering the 90-minute version of the module), have couples complete the “Couple Rituals and Traditions” worksheet on page 43. First, provide participants about two-three minutes to fill out their own worksheet. When done, ask participants to use the remaining time to discuss their responses with their partner (or reflect individually if there is no partner present). Close this activity by asking couples to process the talking points listed above.]


ATTACH
 Foster Your Couple Identity

7


Celebrations


Traditions


Rituals



KEY POINT 

Creating couple and/or family traditions can strengthen the couple identity.

WORKBOOK 

Couple Rituals and Traditions, p. 43.

Objective: identify couple traditions and rituals already present in their relationship, as well as name new traditions and rituals they would like to start.

SPECIAL NOTE 

This is especially important in remarriages and stepfamilies. They may each have established traditions in their previous family that could be different. It is important to “know” each partner’s history – and to explore the possibility of creating new traditions/rituals while respecting and maintaining those that family members wish to retain.

8

ATTACH

Nurture Positive Interactions



Quality of
time, not just
quantity of
time, matters!

9

ATTACH

It's not only WHAT you say, but HOW you say it!



10

ATTACH

It's not only WHAT you say, but HOW you say it!



11

ATTACH

It's not only WHAT you say, but HOW you say it!



12

ATTACH

It's not only WHAT you say, but HOW you say it!



13

ATTACH

It's not only WHAT you say, but HOW you say it!



14

ATTACH

Non Verbal Communication



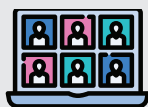
Touch
Volume
Posture
Gestures
Eye contact
Facial expressions
Proximity when speaking
(too close or too far away)

KEY POINT

The way that you say things to your partner is as important as what you are saying.



VIRTUAL ADAPTATION



"Dude" Activity and Ask – See p.114 in *Adaptations for Virtual Delivery* guide.

Another way that you strengthen your attachment – your friendship – to each other is reflected in the way you interact with each other. Earlier we talked about crabby reactions versus caring actions. Let's build from that and further explore ways that you talk with each other.

Much like the time you spend together, it's not the amount of talking that determines the quality of your relationship; it's how satisfied you are with how you communicate. You both want to feel valued and understood. Did you know that so much of what you say is expressed, not in the words you use, but instead in the way you say your words?

[**Advance to Slide 9**] Let me illustrate this.

Activity ("Dude")

- Ask participants to look at their partner.
- Have them alternate saying the word "Dude" (or whatever term of endearment or nickname they have for their partner, e.g., "honey," "babe") after each statement you read.
- Instruct them to respond using only the word "Dude" and to let the meaning of the statement be reflected in how they say "Dude."
- Before starting, model at least one practice statement with the facilitator in order to make sure the activity is clear (e.g., you just saw a child eat a worm).
- **Advance through Slides 10-13**, and read the statement on each slide out loud.

[**Advance to Slide 14**] As you can see - the meaning of one simple word changes dramatically based on how you say it. Volume, posture and other non-verbal responses are just as important as what you say. Ever heard the statement "It's not what you said, it's how you said it"? It's so true! About 65 percent of all face-to-face communication is non-verbal.

Ask: What do you think influences *how* we communicate with each other? [Write examples shared on board.]

[After generating a list, advance to next slide. This list will be referenced in discussion to follow.]

We all have filters that affect the way we communicate – what we say, as well as how we interpret what we hear. Nurturing positive interactions requires us to be aware and understanding of when those filters are at play.

[As you introduce each filter, draw on examples generated by the group on the prior slide, and ask for additional examples for each filter as needed.]

One filter includes distractions. These could be internal (what's going on within us) or external (what's happening around us). Internal distractions might include feeling tired, thinking about something else, planning ahead for the evening, and stressors (think back to *Empower/Care for Self* module). External distractions might include loud or crying children, a bad phone connection, television, and other noises that interfere with our ability to hear each other. As we discussed before, these are times when you work hard to practice being mindful – in the moment. Hopefully, the mindful-practices we have tried so far can help.

*[If you have time (e.g., you are delivering the 90-minute version of the module), show the **Video**, Coca-Cola Social Media Guard, as a fun way to illustrate how social media can also act as an external distraction. After the video, process ideas on how to practice being more mindful – in the moment.]*

Also, much like we discussed at the start of the program regarding the heart-brain connection, one's emotional state can serve as a filter and shut down one's ability to process and respond positively. Most people know when they are not ready to talk due to their emotional state. When we are in a good mood, we communicate better than when we are upset or feeling down. We are also more likely to give others the benefit of the doubt and to perceive what they are saying in a positive way. Think of the emotional state filter in terms of HALT [**Write on board**]: Hungry, Angry, Lonely, and Tired.

Other filters also include beliefs and expectations as well as differences in style. People tend to see or hear what they expect to see or hear in others based on prior experiences (e.g., family-of-origin, couple's history). Also everyone has a different style of communicating. Being aware of each other's way of saying things can help couples avoid misunderstandings.

15



KEY POINT

Communication filters and styles can affect the quality of communication. Recognize these filters.



VIDEO

Coca-Cola Social Media Guard
(1:49 MINUTES)



Download from:
www.nermen.org/ELEVATE.php

Original Source:
https://youtu.be/_u3BRY2RF5I



Optional Video Slide (available at end of Presentation PDF file)

16

ATTACH

Bids for Connection



How you
choose to
respond
matters!



17

ATTACH

It's Not About the Nail!

**KEY POINT**

It is important to understand the different ways you respond to your partner's "bid for connection."

**VIDEO**

It's Not About the Nail (1:42 MINUTES)



Download from
www.nermen.org/ELEVATE.php

Original source:
www.youtube.com/embed/-4EDhdAhrOg

Also, how positive our interactions with each other are is influenced by whether we see our partners responding in ways that are helpful and supportive. In relationships, we are constantly making "bids for connection" – we say or do things in an effort to get our partners to show interest, express affection, help, or connect on some level. How a partner chooses to respond is what often separates happy from unhappy couples.

[Advance to Slide 17] Often times, we expect our partner to respond in a certain way. Or, we may expect them to not respond at all. Sometimes, we may just need or want our partner to listen to our concerns without offering a solution.

Check out this video – maybe you can relate to this couple. But, before we watch this video, keep an open mind that while this video portrays a stereotypical gender issue, the roles could be reversed.

Video: *It's Not About the Nail*

As you can see from the video, the partner was trying to be helpful by responding to her bid for connection. Again, the roles could have been reversed.

Ask: So, what was the problem in what you saw?

[Participants will likely point out that he was a "problem-solver" offering solutions, while she was looking for empathy and acknowledgment. If not, guide this response.]

While we sometimes think we are being helpful, what we say or do may not be what our partner wants at that time. It is important that we try to tune in to the kind of helpful response our partner is looking for.


"Unhelpful" responses can be summarized in two ways:

- Turning away from your partner involves ignoring your partner's bid, physically walking away, not responding, or responding in a way that turns the focus towards you (e.g., talking about your feelings and experiences).
- Turning against your partner is doing or saying something that conveys you do not have time for your partner ("Can't you see I'm busy"), giving them advice before fully understanding their concerns/needs (e.g., "What you need to do is..."), or making their needs seem less important ("Everyone suffers. You'll be fine.").

Ask: So, what are some examples of more *helpful* responses?

[Write examples on board before advancing to the next slide]


ATTACH
Unhelpful Messages



Turning Away
Ignoring your partner's bid or continuing what you were doing.

Turning Against
"Can't you see I'm busy right now?"

18

**KEY POINT**
To understand the difference between turning away and turning against messages.

19

ATTACH

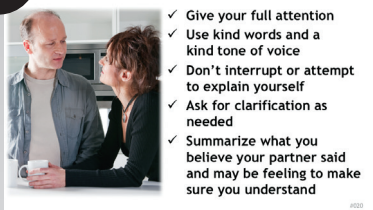
Helpful Messages



20

ATTACH

Ground Rules for Listening



- ✓ Give your full attention
- ✓ Use kind words and a kind tone of voice
- ✓ Don't interrupt or attempt to explain yourself
- ✓ Ask for clarification as needed
- ✓ Summarize what you believe your partner said and may be feeling to make sure you understand

KEY POINT

Helpful responses may or may not come naturally, but can be learned and practiced over time.



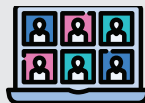
WORKBOOK

Bids for Connection,

p. 44. Objective: learn and notice and respond to each other's bid for connection to help keep their relationship moving in a positive direction.



VIRTUAL ADAPTATION



Bids for Connection – See p.115 in *Adaptations for Virtual Delivery* guide.

When we respond in ways to convey our interest (e.g., make eye contact and avoid other activities), acknowledge our partner's feelings ("This seems really important to you;" "you must feel awful.") and invite more discussion ("I want to understand, please tell me more"), we are turning towards our partner's bid for connection.

For some, communicating in ways that are helpful is easy, but it's not natural. Those skills were likely learned over time. It takes practice (and intentional effort)! Let's give it a go!

Activity (*Bids for Connection*)

- Provide couples about five minutes to role-play the two scenarios on the worksheet on **page 44**.
- **Advance to Slide 20**, and explain the following "ground rules" – note that you will expand on these more during a later lesson (next module):
 1. Give your full attention.
 2. Use kind words and a kind tone of voice.
 3. Don't interrupt or attempt to explain yourself.
 4. Ask for clarification as needed.
 5. Summarize what you believe your partner said and may be feeling to make sure you understand.
- Encourage each partner to play the role of speaker for one example and listener for the other.

While couples can interact in a variety of ways, there are a few processes that seem fundamental to forging healthy relationships over the long term. Feelings of romance or passion may grow or diminish at different times throughout a relationship. However, having a strong friendship provides couples with an enduring and stable foundation over time, regardless of the waxing and waning of romance and passion.

Take a look at your **Relationship Wheel** [or refer to **page 8 in the workbook if you do not have wheels**] and remember to ask yourself these questions on a regular basis:

What am I doing to ensure....

- We give and receive love and affection?
- We schedule meaningful time together?
- We engage in common interests and activities?
- We create and maintain couple traditions and rituals?
- We are working towards common goals?
- We envision ourselves as a team?

Understanding the practices that develop a close, enduring friendship and making a point to incorporate them into the relationship can assist couples in nurturing a strong couple identity and healthy and lasting relationship.

Based on what we have covered, what do you plan to do to nurture your attachment to each other?

Take a moment and write at least one new thing 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

- ✓ How do you and your partner create and protect your time for each other?
- ✓ What is one new thing that you can do in the future?



21

KEY POINT



It is important to regularly self-evaluate how well friendship is being cultivated in the relationship.

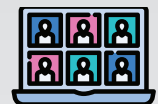
WORKBOOK



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.115 in *Adaptations for Virtual Delivery* guide.

NOTES

[illegible]