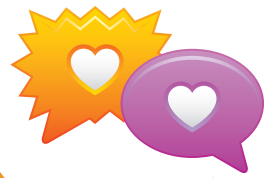


# Engage (& Wrap Up)

*Engaging social support, community ties,  
& sources of meaning*



## Objectives

- Understand the benefits of engaging social support and building community ties on sustaining healthy relationships and marriages.
- Identify sources of personal and community resources (e.g., family, friends, faith groups) and shared meaning (e.g., rituals, spirituality, values) that support healthy couple relationships.
- Explore relationship-building activities and resources to become better connected with their support systems.

## Background Reading for Facilitator

- NERMEN Chapter – *Connect: Engaging in a Positive Social Network of Support*

## Facilitator Materials

- Large balls of yarn (1 per 8-10 participants)
- Balloons (2 per 8-10 participants)
- Participant workbook materials (1 tip sheet; 2 worksheets)
- Video: *Ducks Blown in Wind* (0:46 sec.)
- Video Option 1: *Random Acts of Kindness* (1:44 min.)
- Video Option 2: *Life Vest Inside - Kindness Boomerang* (5:44 min.)
- Timer for pulse count
- Relationship Wheel

## Participant Workbook

- Tip Sheet: *Engaging Support as a Couple* – p. 55-56
- Worksheet: *Growing Family Connections* – p. 57
- Worksheet: *Giving to Others* – p. 58

## Session Overview at a Glance

- Recap of ELEVATE (Slides 1 & 2)
- Introduction to “Engage” (Slides 3 & 4)
- Support from others, safety-net activity (Slides 5-9)
- Summary and action plan (Slide 10)
- Program wrap up (Slide 11)

## 45-60 Minutes

- 5-7 Minutes
- 8-10 Minutes
- 28-35 Minutes
- 2-4 Minutes
- 2-4 Minutes

1

# ELEVATE

Recap



2

# ELEVATE

Your Relationship



## KEY POINT

Elevating one's relationship requires effort, commitment and perseverance.



## VIDEO

### Ducks Blown in Wind

(0:46 SECONDS)



Download from  
[www.nermen.org/ELEVATE.php](http://www.nermen.org/ELEVATE.php)

Original source:  
[www.youtube.com/embed/bcPvLWc\\_Li8](http://www.youtube.com/embed/bcPvLWc_Li8)

We have covered a lot of topics during this program! You likely have done or are doing many of the things we covered. Hopefully, you also learned something new and have some new skills that you can practice and use to *ELEVATE* your relationship.

So how does everything we covered so far tie together? Let's watch this brief video first, and then process before we cover one final component to a healthy relationship.

**Video:** *Ducks Blown in Wind*

**Ask:** What did you observe in the video?

[After a few examples, **advance to Slide 2** to illustrate the connection between *ELEVATE* concepts and duck video.]

While we hope that every day is a good day, sometimes we are faced with challenges. In relationships, when stressors crowd us (or blow us around like the ducks in the video), find ways to meet your individual needs, first, in order to meet the needs of those around us – much like the mother duck balanced herself first before going after her young (*Empower Yourself*). And, she did not give up! Like her, we have to be intentional and committed in keeping our relationships together and moving forward (*Lay the Foundation*).

To do so, we have to be on the same page. Mother duck was alert to where her young were. Similarly, we have to be aware of what is going on in our partner's life (*Enlighten*). When we are enlightened, we become more in tune to our partner's strengths and needs and show love in ways that keep the relationship strong (*Value*). This requires staying connected with each other (*Attached*) and managing stress and differences together in healthy ways (*Tame*).

But, sometimes we need support from others (*Engage*).

Now, we are going to end the program focusing on the last aspect of a healthy relationship: the connections, or relationships, we form and engage in with others. Couples live and love within the context of a larger community of meaningful relationships.

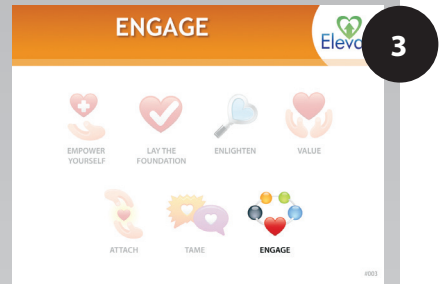
**Ask:** What does having social connections to resources and other people do for individuals and couples? How might they be of help during times of crisis, stress, and change?

[**Advance to Slide 4**] When couples encounter challenges, they typically turn to the meaningful connections in their lives for support, solace, or perspective in managing their concerns. We need others and they need us. Belonging, meaning, and support all flow to a degree through the positive connections that we develop and share with others. The supportive and healthy relationships you engage in with others create a “safety net” that can support you in times of need. These relationships with others also can reinforce the meaningfulness of your relationship.

To illustrate this, let’s do an activity together.

#### **Activity** (*Connections, Set Up*)

- Have participants form circles around the room and give each group a ball of yarn. The number of circles and persons in each one will depend on the size of your group; however, about eight people per circle works best. Be sure each circle is small enough so the “nets” will not be too spread out.
- As you read through and discuss material on the next few slides, instruct participants to share one thought, then hold a piece of the yarn as they toss the ball of yarn across the circle to another person.
- The groups will remain standing throughout the remainder of this activity/session.



#### **KEY POINT**

Positive social networks can provide meaningful support to couple relationships.



#### **SPECIAL NOTE**

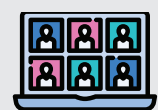
The purpose of doing this activity as a group is to also reinforce the importance of building social connections with others. By the end of the program, it is expected that some rapport has been established among the group and they are comfortable sharing examples.

If time is limited, you may opt to process the questions in a group discussion rather than doing this activity.



#### **VIRTUAL ADAPTATION**

Connections – See p.119 in *Adaptations for Virtual Delivery* guide.



5

## ENGAGE

Identify your support network!



Who provides support to your relationship and family?

How have they supported you?

## KEY POINT

Close family and friends can be a source of support to couples in various ways.



## WORKBOOK

**Growing Family Connections, p. 57.**

Objective: recognize the numerous ways extended family members provide support for one another and identify ways they can build and maintain those relationships.



## SPECIAL NOTE

If you do not do the yarn activity, you may opt to ask the questions as a part of a large group discussion.



Be sure to prepare the room and the participants in advance for the yarn activity. Drinks and other items on tables WILL need to be relocated.

**VIRTUAL ADAPTATION**


Connections, Part 1 – See p.120 in *Adaptations for Virtual Delivery* guide.

**Ask:** When you hear the word “family,” what comes to mind?

Each of us defines family in a different way. Some of us only think of people we live with, such as our spouse or partner, our children, and maybe some other relatives or friends. Others include relatives outside of their home, including grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, as well as close friends and neighbors who provide support. Our family includes people who we love and who love us, and those with whom we have a shared history or experiences. Family members give each other love and support that helps us get through good times and bad.

Individuals and couples also work to grow and maintain relationships with friends and other couples. These relationships can also be a strong source of support during challenging times.

However, it is also important to note that not all family and peer relationships have a positive influence. Identifying those that do support your relationship is important. Let’s get started!

**Activity** (*Connections, Part 1; 4 minutes*)

**Ask:** Who are family and friends in your life who have provided you support with your relationship and family? And, how does that person support you and your relationship?

- *Encourage each person to share their example within 10-20 seconds so that everyone has a turn. Remind them to describe who provides support and how.*
- *After sharing their example, participants should toss the ball of yarn to another person across from them.*
- *Allow for three rounds where each person shares one example during each round.*
- *Participants should not toss the ball of yarn to the same person more than once.*

In your workbook we have provided you a worksheet, *Growing Family Connections* on **page 57**, to help you identify other ways that extended family members provide support and ways to build and maintain your relationship.

In addition to the important extended family relationships and friendships you described, there are likely others in your community who could serve as a resource to you. Sometimes couples experience problems within their relationship that they may feel unable to work through on their own. Or, they may not have troubles but just want to find ways to make their relationship even stronger. Engaging those resources (like this program) can be helpful.

**Activity** (*Connections, Part 2; 2 minutes*)

**Ask:** What resources exist in your community that you could turn to for support?

- Ask each person to share one example of a community resource that offers support (20 seconds each).
- Encourage them to not duplicate responses.

[**Advance to Slide 7**] And, while you can receive support from others, research suggests *offering* support to others can also be meaningful and beneficial for couple relationships. Couples benefit when they see themselves as part of a larger community and take steps to contribute to the well-being of others.

**Activity** (*Connections, Part 3; 2 minutes*)

**Ask:** What are some organizations or places that offer opportunities for you to provide service to others?

- Ask each person to share one example of a community organization that provides opportunities for them to offer service to others (20 seconds each).
- Encourage them to briefly describe the types of service opportunities available (if known).

**Ask:** Were community resources shared in your circle that you were not originally familiar with?

[Ask for examples from each circle. Examples may include church, schools, community centers, and Cooperative Extension! The goal here is to provide participants an opportunity to hear about resources that may not have been shared in their circle.]

**ENGAGE**  
 Identify support resources in your community!

6



What community resources can help support your relationship?

**ENGAGE**  
 Serve others to strengthen your relationship!

7



What are some ways that you can provide service to others?

### KEY POINT

Couple relationships are strengthened when they engage with community resources for support and to serve others.



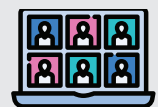
### SPECIAL NOTE

If you do not do the yarn activity, you may opt to ask the questions as a part of a large group discussion.



Also, consider preparing a list of local resources that you can share with participants to add to their workbook and reference as needed.

### VIRTUAL ADAPTATION



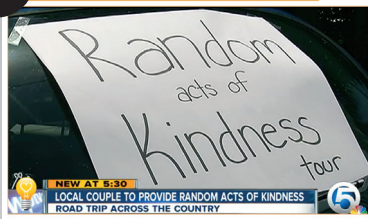
Connections, Part 2-3 – See p.120 in *Adaptations for Virtual Delivery* guide.



8

# ENGAGE

Random Acts of Kindness



## KEY POINT

The connections couples have with others can provide stability and support in times of difficulty.



## WORKBOOK

**Giving to Others, p. 58.**

Objective: understand how providing service to others can help strengthen their couple relationship.



## VIDEO

**Random Acts of Kindness** (1:44 MINUTES)

Download from  
[www.nermen.org/ELEVATE.php](http://www.nermen.org/ELEVATE.php)

Original source:

<https://youtu.be/wo3127EeuX0>

**Life Vest Inside - Kindness Boomerang** (5:44 MINUTES)

Download from:  
[www.nermen.org/ELEVATE.php](http://www.nermen.org/ELEVATE.php)

Original Source:

<https://youtu.be/nwAYpLVyeFU>



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

[Note, couples remain standing in their circles. However, monitor the energy of the group to decide whether to skip this slide/video if the group's energy is dipping. Some will enjoy the standing and appreciate the physical activity – but some may not.]

In your workbook is a worksheet, *Giving to Others* on **page 58**, intended to help you consider how you can put your interests and abilities to use in giving to and serving others in your community. Research shows that volunteerism has helpful health and well-being benefits.

**Ask:** Has anyone ever offered or received a random act of kindness?

Think about how that experience made you feel as we watch this brief video of a news report about one couple who took random acts of kindness across the country.

**Video:** *Random Acts of Kindness* OR *Kindness Boomerang*

[We have provided two video options that illustrate random acts of kindness. Also, you can show a different video of your choice, instead. Only one video related to volunteerism or random acts of kindness needs to be presented in order to facilitate discussion and reinforce the key point.]

**Ask:** How does seeing something like that make you feel?

Consider those emotions you felt and how they created positive heart-brain connections like those we have been describing in this program. While all of us may not be able to do something like what this couple did, I'm sure there are little things you can do in your local communities.

Couples who see themselves as part of a larger community tend to feel more positive about their relationships. These connections are sources of meaning for us that can help to guide our attitudes and actions, provide stability and direction, and offer comfort in times of difficulty.

Individuals who connect with sources of meaning often rely upon such sources in making decisions about family life and interacting with a partner. Couples can find strength in shared value systems that link them together in how they live as a family or serve in their community.

Like the proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child”, it also takes a village to support a family. We cannot thrive in isolation.

Let’s see how a couple would do in your community!

**Activity** (*Connections, Part 4; 1 minute*)

- Place two balloons the (“couple”) in the center of each circle and have participants try to keep their balloons aloft for one minute.
- When done, ask participants to return to their seats.

**Ask:**

- How easy or difficult was it to keep your “couple” on your net and from falling through it? [*Emphasize the importance of having multiple sources of support (represented by the various threads in the net) to maintain strong couple relationship and family.*]
- What did you do when one or both partners fell through your net? [*Emphasize that when couples are in trouble and need support, the positive connections formed with others can help lift us up in times of need.*]

*[Participant can remain standing in their circles as you summarize and bring the program to a close.]*

**ENGAGE**

Connect to sources of meaning



9



**KEY POINT**

The connections couples have with others can provide stability and support in times of difficulty.



**SPECIAL NOTE**

If you do not do the yarn activity, skip Part 4 and reframe the ask questions to get at the main point emphasized in the facilitator notes.



**VIRTUAL ADAPTATION**

Connections, Part 4 – See p.121 in *Adaptations for Virtual Delivery* guide.



10

## Action Plan

What do you plan to do to engage others to enrich your relationships?



## KEY POINT

It is important that couples be pro-active in engaging and fostering supportive relationships with others.



## WORKBOOK

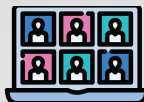
## My Action Plan, p. 2.

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



## VIRTUAL ADAPTATION

Action Plan – See p.121 in *Adaptations for Virtual Delivery* guide.



In summary, couples can strengthen their relationship by engaging positive social networks in various ways.

As summarized on your **Relationship Wheel** [or refer to **page 8** in the workbook if you do not have wheels], regularly ask yourself “What efforts am I making to...”

- Grow and maintain extended family relationships?
- Disengage from connections that do not support our relationship?
- Nurture supportive friendships with others?
- Engage community organizations and services to support others and our relationship?
- Use the resources around us to strengthen our relationship?

Based on what we have covered, what do you plan to do to engage others in ways that enrich your relationship? Take a moment and write at least one new thing down in your workbook on **page 2**. [If participants are still standing in their circles, encourage them to do this later, with their partner.]

Let’s take one last look at our Expectations Checklist we created at the start of the program.

[Check-off each topic that was addressed. If all the expectations have been met, highlight this to the group. If expectations remain on the list, consider ways the skills covered in the program can help couples achieve that expectation.]



In closing, the skills we need to manage stressful times and *elevate* our relationships are not innate.

Our patterns in responses come from what we've observed and learned through past family experiences, former relationships, current and new relationships in our lives, and new experiences that expose us to new and healthy ways of strengthening our relationships (like this program!)

We encourage you to take individual responsibility for holding on to good skills that benefit your relationships, and to be open to letting go of those that don't and practicing new skills in their place.

This program was an important effort to do just that. Participating in this program demonstrates your commitment to making your relationship stronger. Hopefully, you created new positive memories that you can deposit into your emotional bank account. But, it does not end here.

Everything we covered takes practice to work well. You and your partner have to find ways to use the skills in your daily interactions and make the effort to continue the conversations you started here. Try it for a month. Make time to complete the workbook pages assigned as homework and follow-through with your action plans.

**[Advance to Slide 12]** Use the **Relationship Wheel** [or refer to **pages 7-8** in workbook if you do not have wheels] to evaluate how you are working to make the relationship work.

***ELEVATE your relationship!***



11

### KEY POINT

Through practice and application of the skills learned, couples can ELEVATE their relationship!



12

### VIRTUAL ADAPTATION



Graduation Celebration! - See p.121 in *Adaptations for Virtual Delivery* guide.

[illegible]