Virtual Delivery Adaptation Guide



Inline delivery of couples relationship education (CRE) has been rapidly growing as a preferred medium for program delivery (Georgia Salivar & Doss, 2013). Compared to face-to-face programs, online CRE offers greater accessibility, is more cost-effective, and can reach a broader and unique audience (Doss et al., 2017; Georgia Salivar et al., 2020). The educational shift from the traditional in-person, classroom format for CRE to online CRE, however, has primarily focused on self-directed, asynchronous formats where couples participate from home with little or no contact with a CRE professional (e.g., Halford et al., 2004; Duncan et al., 2009). Research has found that these approaches are effective in producing positive relationship outcomes (Doss et al., 2019; Price-Blackshear, 2020).

Yet, despite its flexibility and ease, couples participating in self-directed CRE may feel less motivated to complete a fully asynchronous program because of a lack of engagement, support, and accountability that facilitator-led programs typically offer (lanakieva, 2019). This absence of interaction may limit the potential effects of the program (Danaher, 2009). In fact, when compared to completely face-to-face or self-directed learning alone, CRE that combines both formats yields stronger positive outcomes (McAllister et al., 2012). Recent efforts have reinforced the role and added benefits of having an online coach (e.g., counselor, therapist) in web-based, asynchronous interventions for couples (Carter et al., 2015; Roddy et al., 2018).

Collectively, the growing evidence showing the benefits of CRE for couples participating either face-to-face, online, or a combination of both suggests that there may be similar value in CRE that is delivered online using both audio and video technology that allows for synchronous interaction (e.g., video-conferencing), also referred to as **computer mediated communication** (**CMC**; Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2010). Despite the lack of research

evaluating the impact of CRE delivered to couples through a synchronous CMC format, similar virtual programs have been found to be effective with adult learners in general (Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2010) and from rural and remote communities (Rao et al., 2011). As the demand for online learning has grown, particularly during the pandemic crisis of 2020, and the technology to support it continues to change, facilitating a positive "social" environment for adult couples to effectively learn within an "electronic" environment can be challenging, albeit very doable (Cercone, 2008).



Questions? Recommendations? We welcome your feedback and recommendations. Contact Dr. Ted Futris (tfutris@uga.edu) with any questions and to share ideas for further strengthening the curriculum and the virtual program experience.

For new and/or updated ELEVATE resources, visit www.nermen.org/ELEVATE.php.

The following guide provides recommendations to support the delivery of the ELEVATE curriculum in a virtual platform. These recommendations are intended for a synchronous CMC, online format with small groups of couples. The number of couples per group should be a carefully processed decision that considers various factors that could impact curriculum delivery quality and fidelity (Proudfoot et al., 2011) and adult learning (Cercone, 2008). Some of those factors include, but are not limited to, the online platform used, number of facilitators and support staff available, connectivity quality (e.g., bandwidth for facilitators, staff and participants), the level of engagement expected from participants, and the number of sessions/classes and amount of time per session/class in the workshop series.

The recommendations provided here were piloted by two projects funded by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families: (1) the Fostering Relationship and Economic Enrichment project (Project F.R.E.E.) at the University of Georgia (Grant #90FM0081) and (2) the Alabama Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education Initiative (AHMREI) at Auburn University (Grant #90FM0082). Both projects used the Zoom platform to deliver ELEVATE to couples between April to September of 2020. Project F.R.E.E. delivered six workshop series consisting of eight classes each (48 total classes), and each class was approximately 90 minutes long. Each series was delivered by two facilitators with two to four support staff, and group sizes ranged from five to 32 couples (average of 20 couples). AHMREI delivered 13 workshop series ranging from three to six classes (56 total classes), and each class was approximately 75-180 minutes long (average of 120 minutes). Each series was delivered by two facilitators, and group sizes ranged from five to 26 couples (average of nine couples).

Below are general tips and recommendations based on using the Zoom platform; these tips could be adapted for use with other platforms as well. Also, recommendations for sharing the workbook with couples and adapting activities for each lesson are provided. Facilitators are welcome to try additional adaptations based on their experience with virtual programming, the needs of couples enrolled in the program, and, importantly, other approaches that have been tested and found to be effective for virtual program delivery models. Please share your tested ideas with Dr. Ted Futris (tfutris@uga.edu) so that they can be shared with other ELEVATE facilitators.

GENERAL TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

• Keep each class to about 90-120 minutes max, and provide breaks. Each module is designed to be taught in as little as 60 minutes, with the exception of Tame which is about 75 minutes long. We recommend scheduling each virtual class for at least 90 minutes, but no more than 120 minutes (2 hours) to give you enough time for delays with getting started (e.g., connectivity problems, couples slow to log-in) or additional time needed for activities and/or discussion. In our experience, participants are more likely to be happy finishing early then finishing later than expected. Importantly, provide a 10-minute

break every 45-60 minutes of programming to help minimize "Zoom fatigue," allow participants an opportunity to re-energize, and promote engagement (Sklar, 2020).

Set up ZOOM in advance. When setting up the Zoom meeting, be sure to select all the settings for the features you may want to use, including but not limited to: (a) waiting rooms – helpful for managing when the couples are able to enter the classroom and



confirming you don't have any unexpected participants ("Zoom-bombers"); (b) breakout rooms – helpful for small group discussions and activities; and (c) assigning co-facilitators and support staff as co-hosts. For help with Zoom meeting settings, visit https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/115005756143-Changing-your-meeting-settings.

- Have enough support. Have at least two (2) facilitators per class, or at least one (1) facilitator for every 10 couples. Additional support staff could also be helpful with managing and engaging larger groups of couples. During each class session, have one facilitator teach while the other facilitator(s) and/or support staff help out in the following ways: move participants from the waiting room into the session, monitor participant questions in the chat or when they "raise their hand," engage participants via chat, manage muting participants (to minimize background noise and distractions), set-up videos so they are ready to share, and be ready to facilitate in case the primary facilitator loses their connection or has technical difficulties.
- **Be mindful of how participants see you.** How is your camera positioned? Will they see your full face straight on, or at an angle (do you want them to see up your nose)? How are you dressed? What is behind you? You may want to avoid using virtual backgrounds they can sometimes be too distracting and could cause video delays for some participants. Also, sit facing a window or position a lamp or circle light behind your computer so your face is lit evenly. Zoom also allows you to adjust your video settings to enhance lighting and video quality. As well, there may be times while you are presenting that you want couples to clearly see you (and your co-facilitator) as you facilitate an activity. During these times, select "spotlight video" and this will highlight you as the primary active speaker for all participants in the class.
- Download or save files to your computer, do NOT work from files online or from your flash drive.
 Connectivity can be unreliable. As such, download and save the presentation and video files to your computer to share them from your computer. These files are also included on a flash-drive provided with the purchased copy of the curriculum.
- Share videos effectively for all to see and hear. When sharing video clips from the curriculum with participants, be sure to select "share computer sound" so participants can hear the audio from the video. And, do not mute yourself while the video is playing; if you do, participants will not be able to hear the audio from the video. Note, connectivity may influence how well the video appears and sounds to participants. Test your video and audio sharing in advance (before each class) with your co-facilitators and support staff.



For additional help with videos on Zoom, go to: https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/202954249-Optimizing-a-shared-video-clip-in-full-screen. Also, links to the original source are provided for each video recommended in ELEVATE. If participants are having trouble seeing or hearing the video, you can share the link with participants in the chat for them to click and watch (*just be sure to provide them time to do so before moving on*).

• **Provide participants a quick walk-through of zoom basics.** If feasible, schedule a one-on-one (preferred) or group session to practice Zoom with participants. During this practice session, check their connectivity, and walk them through some of the Zoom features. During your first class, take time to point out and explain some of the Zoom features such as (a) how to chat with everyone versus private chat; (b) finding and selecting the reactions to "applaud" or give a "thumbs up;" (c) where to find "raise hand" (under participants) and to click on this when they want to share; and (d) how to mute their audio and pause their video.

- Let's see everyone. Encourage all couples to share their video in the beginning of the session so that you can see both partners. This helps with monitoring attendance (if that is important for you to document) and creates "accountability" by encouraging couples to be present and engaged. Be mindful, however, of the fatigue for participants who have their cameras on throughout the session. Explain that there will be times when you encourage them to turn off their cameras to just listen or to do a couple activity. This will allow their brains to "rest" and help keep participants actively engaged and attentive. You could also provide, or ask couples to use, sticky notes to cover their camera when they need/want a break.
- Use "chat" to engage participants. Consider what you want participants to chat to everyone versus private chat to you. Provide very clear instructions to participants (e.g., "Find my name in the chat, select my name, now send me [content]"). Have co-facilitators and support staff use chat to check in with couples throughout each session (e.g., after activities) to see how things are going and if they have questions. Also, when asking couples to share responses in the chat, be sure to pause and provide them enough time to process and post their comments before moving on to the next topic.
- Use "breakout rooms." Breakout rooms can be useful in facilitating small group discussions and sharing opportunities (examples provided in lessons below). While in breakout rooms, push notifications to the couples reminding them of the questions they are discussing and the time remaining. Also, breakout rooms can be used to provide couples privacy during activities that require them to fill out their workbook and talk about what they wrote with each other. This may be especially helpful for couples who are not physically located in the same space; they can connect and share with each other within this virtual space!
- Mute participants. It can be very distracting when participants (and facilitators) are unmuted and have a lot of background noise or are talking to each other. One of the co-facilitators or support staff should be assigned as the Zoom co-host responsible for muting all participants. When it is time for participants to share, this co-host can call on participants one-at-a-time and unmute them; when done, mute them again and call on the next couple.
- Provide an interactive experience. While it can be challenging to have an interactive experience in a virtual platform, like Zoom, it can be done! Participants will enjoy each class more and will be more likely to learn (and eventually apply) the information when facilitators connect the content to their real life situations even situations that might arise during the virtual class (e.g., children interrupting; distractions at home or on Zoom; challenges hearing and understanding others). Create high energy levels by being present (minimize distractions around you), ready to facilitate, and engaging. Encourage couples to share using the chat feature. During activities and breakout sessions, have clear assigned roles and expectations for how co-facilitators and support staff help encourage involvement from participants. Also, use polls to engage couples (e.g., icebreakers) and solicit quick and helpful feedback from all couples. Polls can be created in Zoom, or you can use other poll resources (e.g., https://www.polleverywhere.com/).
- Use virtual "flip charts." Because many participants may be visual learners, it will be helpful to provide a
 - way for couples to see the responses shared when engaged in group discussions, particularly where you see "Ask" throughout the curriculum. In place of a flip chart, you can utilize the whiteboard tool in Zoom or share a blank power point slide (blank templates are available with the curriculum) to record responses that couples share, including those in chat. While one facilitator is engaging and calling on couples, another facilitator can share the "virtual flip chart" and record responses shared for all to see.



■ Start each class with mindfulness practice. As you know, mindfulness-based practices are integrated into the ELEVATE curriculum to help couples learn one strategy for managing stress and being in the present moment in order to fully experience the moment. Starting each class (after the introduction module) with a 1-2 minute mindfulness practice could be a helpful way to get all of your couples to be present and focused on what they are learning; and, it provides additional practice to develop this helpful skill!



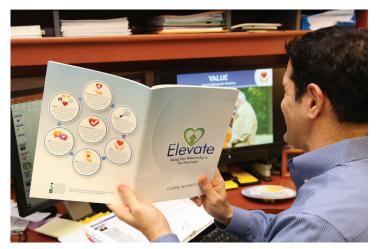
- **Do not emphasize the difference between virtual and in-person sessions.** How satisfied couples are with their program experience can greatly influence what they take away in terms of skills learned and applied. As the facilitator, you will know that the activities in each module are experienced differently in-person. This does not mean that the activity in-person is "better" or would have been more effective than the virtual delivery of the activity. As such, avoid telling participants that the experience would have been different in-person so that they do not feel like the virtual experience is "lesser" or not the same as being in-person. (e.g., "oh, this activity would have been so much more fun if we were all together in-person"). Make the virtual program experience great for your couples!
- **Prepare in advance for a virtual graduation.** Typically, during an in-person program you would plan for a fun graduation ceremony during the last class of the program. Give some thought to how you might want to celebrate the couples' graduation from the program virtually. For example, beginning mid-way through the program (after you have established rapport with the couples), begin to ask couples to email or text you photographs of them having fun together and/or practicing the skills they learned. Explain that you would like to use the photographs for a special presentation during the last class. At the conclusion of the last class, share the photographs of the couples (with their names) in a PowerPoint presentation set to some fun "graduation-type" music. Alternatively, you could also ask each couple to send you their favorite song and play their songs during the slideshow presentation.
- Practice, practice, practice! Schedule time with your co-facilitator(s) and other support staff to practice navigating Zoom and all the features you plan to use. Practice setting up your camera and teaching into the camera (so participants will see you). Practice sharing your screen to show presentation slides and play video clips from the curriculum. Practice setting up breakout rooms, moving participants to different rooms, and moving yourself (as co-hosts) into breakout rooms to check-in on couples.

RECORDING CLASSES

Recording classes and/or the facilitators going through the curriculum lessons can be a helpful resource for couples who are enrolled in your virtual and in-person program. For example, recordings could be used as makeup classes for couples who miss a session/class. As well, couples could be asked to watch the recordings before live (virtual or in-person) sessions that focus on processing and practicing the skills covered in the recordings. If you decide to record virtual classes or lesson content, remember the "Vegas" ground rule and ask all participants for permission to record first. Also, the recordings can ONLY be shared with couples enrolled in your program. Because of copyright, recordings of the classes should not be made available as part of a "stand-alone" program without first consulting with and obtaining permission from Dr. Ted Futris (tfutris@uga.edu), first author of the ELEVATE curriculum.

WORKBOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

- If feasible, mail the Elevate workbook (2 copies per couple) and the Elevate wheel to all couples in advance of the first session/class of the virtual program.
- Before each virtual session/class, email the pages from the workbook that correspond with the lesson you are facilitating to each participants. (PDF copies of the workbook pages, by module, are available online for free download by facilitators.) This email can also serve as a reminder to participants of the day and time of the



next virtual class. Note, not all participants will be able to print the workbook pages and may only be able to view them on their computer or mobile device.

- Use the virtual PowerPoint slides that integrate the workbook pages. (PDF copies of the these slides, by module, are available online for free download by facilitators and are included on the flash-drive provided with the purchased copy of the curriculum.) Showing the appropriate pages after the slide they are referenced in the facilitator guide can be helpful to participants who may not have a copy of the workbook with them and who are unable to print the pages. Encourage these couples to write down their responses on a piece of paper and to transfer their responses later to the workbook when they receive it (or can print it out).
- If participants do not have their workbook and are unable to print the emailed workbook pages, you may not want to use "breakout rooms" during the activities so that participants can see the workbook pages and instructions on screen.
- When having participants complete the workbook pages during specified activities, be sure to provide them with enough time to do so. Read and clarify the instructions; this can be especially helpful for low literacy participants.
- To minimize participant "Zoom fatigue" and allow their brains to "rest," you could encourage participants to stop their video (or use a sticky note to cover their camera) while they complete their workbook pages. This will also provide couples some private time while they process the workbook material.
- Consider playing some soft background music (no words) to provide couples a cue for when to start and end the activity. When you are ready to bring the group back together to discuss, slowly reduce the volume of the music as a cue for couples to begin wrapping up their conversation.

MODULE ADAPTATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On the following pages are some recommended adaptations for each module. Please note that the **page numbers** provided below are in reference to the pages in the current facilitator manual. Also, when a **slide** is referenced below, it is referencing the slide number in the current facilitator manual, not the slide number in the

virtual PowerPoint slide files. As noted above in "Workbook Recommendations," PowerPoint slides have been added to the virtual presentation files that show the workbook pages; these new slides are not reflected in the facilitator manual.



Look for this icon in each module to determine where virtual adaptations are recommended.

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Module 1: Introduction

Virtual Adaptations







SPECIAL NOTE

In order to make this more interactive, facilitators can use the whiteboard tool in Zoom to type out the rules discussed within the group and add any additional rules that are discussed. This is to replace writing them on the flip chart.

Page 2: Line Up Icebreaker (Slide 1)

This activity is not possible in a virtual program. Instead, see the recommended adaptation made to the "Our Story" activity on slide 4 (below).

Prepare your welcome and self-introductions accordingly. Because Zoom (or the virtual platform you are using) may be unfamiliar to some participants, use this time to walk participants through the various features in Zoom.

Page 4: Ground Rules (Slide 3)

To create a safe and engaging space in a virtual platform, we recommend some additional "**Ground Rules**" (**Slide 3**). A new slide has been added to the virtual presentation file with recommended ground rules. A few unique ground rules to consider and reinforce in a virtual classroom include:

- Please stay MUTED when not sharing very important that the "co-host" mutes all participants and unmutes them when calling on them to share.
- Share your video this will help facilitators gauge participant reactions and engagement in the activities. It also helps couples develop a sense of connection with other couples in the class. Explain, however, that there will be times when couples can pause their video to give their brains "a break" and complete some of the activities in private.
- Be mindful of what you say we added this one because couples may have their children nearby and we want participants to carefully consider what they say and whether it is appropriate for children (with them or with other couples in the class) to hear.
- No driving while you are in the virtual classroom you would not think that this would be a concern, but it has happened. It is not safe, and in most states it is against the law, to be on your mobile device while driving. If participants are driving while they are in the class, explain what will happen. For example, we recommend moving them to the "waiting room" until they reach their destination; do not "remove" participants because they will not be able to reconnect using the same zoom link.

MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION

Page 4: Our Story (Slide 4)

For this activity, if the class is larger than 10 couples, it is recommended to split up into breakout rooms with no more than 10-15 couples per breakout room. Determine in advance who will manage breakout room assignments. If possible, assign couples to rooms ahead of time.

Also, in place of the "Line Up Icebreaker" activity (slide 1), ask each couple during the "Our Story" activity to also share how long they have been together. The facilitator (or support staff) in each breakout room could add up the total number of years from all of the couples. Once back together in the main room, each facilitator could share the range (shortest and longest years together) as well as the sum total number of years of "relationship experience" for the couples in their breakout room. Use this as an opportunity to celebrate the range of experience that the couples bring to the program.

To help move this activity along at a steady pace, the facilitator (or support staff) can either call on couples one-at-a-time or play a game like "Where in the world is..." (or replace "world" with your state's name). The game works like this:

- 1) Ask all participants to place their screens in gallery mode. This will allow everyone to see each other on one screen (for participants on their phones, they can scroll back and forth to see all participants on their screens). Also, if they have not already done so, ask each couple to include both partner's first name in their video screen.
- 2) The facilitator starts by saying "Where in the world is..." and names one couple.
- 3) The facilitator and all participants point to where that couple is located on their screen relative to their own video (note: do not point at the screen; instead, point up, down, left, right, diagonally). This will be different for everyone and will create a fun way for participants to get oriented with Zoom and for everyone to see and meet each other.
- 4) The couple who was called on then unmutes themselves and each partner introduces the other partner ("Our Story").
- 5) When done, the couple calls on another couple (who has not shared yet) by saying "Where in the world is...[couple's name]."
- 6) Repeat steps 2-5 until all couples have introduced themselves.



SPECIAL NOTE
Estimate at least
45-60 seconds per
couple to share their story
and navigating possible
challenges (e.g., figuring
out how to unmute,
getting audio to work);
with a class of 15 couples,
you may need at least 15
minutes for couples to
share.

MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION



SPECIAL NOTE

Note, This is a great opportunity to explain how to use the chat feature and how to change the location of the chat box on their screen. Walking through this clearly so everyone understands will ensure a better use of the chat feature later in the program.





Page 5: Expectations (Slide 5)

It is important to gauge each participant's expectations for what they hope to get out of this program. Since each participant cannot share their expectations using sticky notes, instead ask participants to PRIVATE chat a designated co-facilitator (or support staff) "what they would like to walk away from this experience with."

Do <u>not</u> read the expectations out yet! Explain that your cofacilitator will document everything received in the chat and provide a summary of what was shared (with NO names) in a few moments.

After presenting the program goals (**Slide 7, p. 6**), provide a summary of what the participants shared as their expectations for the program.

Page 6: Shared Expectations after Program Goals (Slide 7)

Modify the opening ("From this list of expectations...") since expectations will be shared after showing the video and reviewing the program goals.

After presenting the **program goals** (**Slide 7**), summarize the expectations that participants posted in the PRIVATE chat. Remember, do not include participant names.

Importantly, summarize the expectations in a PowerPoint slide or MS Word (or like) document that can be shown to participants. Save this file and refer to it in later modules when checking off expectations that were met during the end of each session/class.

Page 11: Take Your Pulse (Slide 16)

During this activity, be sure to check-in on each couple to confirm they are able to locate their pulse before you start the timer. Have participants click on the "thumbs up" reaction (or like options in other platforms) when they locate their pulse.

Also, it is important to provide very clear instructions regarding how you are going to use a timer. Announce "Start" when they will begin counting their heart beat, and announce "Stop" when they should stop counting. Have participants click on the "thumbs up" to confirm they understand. If you have a timer that can be shown on screen, use it.

Module 2: Empower Yourself



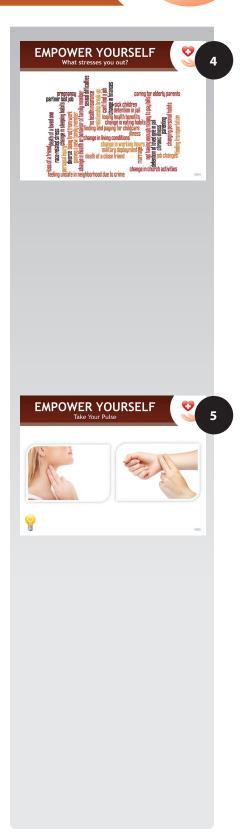


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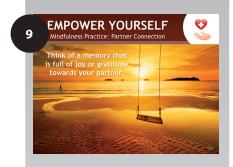
Page 15: Stressors Crowd Us (Slide 4)

Because couples are not together in the same physical space to do this activity, adapt the activity in the following way:

- Ask participants to share at least one stressor in their life in the chat (to everyone). Read them out as they appear in the chat.
- After everyone has shared at least one stressor, and a variety of stressors are available, ask participants to turn towards their partner. Pause until they do so.
- While couples are muted, ask participants to talk with their partner about their day or what they look forward to doing during the weekend (or another topic of choice). Explain to them that you want them to keep talking with each other, no matter what they hear.
- If you have some soft background music available (with no words), play it. Explain to the participants that you want them to talk with their partner while the music is playing; and when the music ends, they will stop talking.
- While couples are talking, facilitators (unmuted) begin reading out loud the stressors posted in the chat by the participants. Gradually read the stressors louder and louder.
- After 30 seconds, or when couples appear to have stopped talking with each other (because they seem too distracted by the noise), end the activity and proceed to the next activity (Take our Pulse, Slide 5).



MODULE 2: EMPOWER YOURSELF



Page 19: Partner Connection (Slide 9)

Before starting the **Partner Connection** mindfulness practice, be sure that each participant's audio is muted (except for the facilitator guiding couples through the mindfulness practice). Background music is not necessary, but if you have some soft music (with no words) and are able to play it on your computer, feel free to do so; just keep the volume low so the music does not distract from the guided mindfulness practice. Read the instructions as provided in the manual.

Also, this would be a good time to invite participants to turn off their video and just listen. You could say something like: "We invite you to turn off your video during this activity, to minimize distractions, and we (the facilitators) will also turn off our video." Then, after the activity, say something like: "When you are ready, we invite you to turn back on your video to let us know you are ready to discuss (or move on to the next thing, etc.)..."



Page 24: What I am Grateful For (Slide 14)

After participants share with their partner at least three things they are grateful for in their life and partner, ask participants to share at least one of those things in the chat with everyone. Facilitators can read those out loud to the group.



Page 25: Action Plan (Slide 15)

While participants are completing their **Action Plan**, share the PowerPoint slide or MS Word (or like) document where you summarized the participants' expectations (from Module 1). Review the expectations and identify which expectations were met during this session/class.

Also, use this opportunity to highlight some of the expectations that will be addressed during the next session/class as a way to encourage participants to attend.

Because participants tend to dress more casually and relaxed for virtual meetings, as a "teaser" you can encourage participants to be sure they are wearing presentable bottoms/pants for the next class, but don't explain why to participants! (See adaptation "Fingertips" activity in Module 3).

Module 3: Lay the Foundation

Virtual Adaptations



Page 28: Fingertips (Slide 1)

Because couples are not together in the same physical space to do and observe this activity, adapt the activity in the following way:

- Explain to couples that you would like for them to walk around the room they are currently in, but there are specific "rules" they have to follow.
- First, instruct couples to stand up in front of their video camera (this is why you asked them at the end of the last class to "wear presentable bottoms/pants"), face their partner, and touch all 10 fingertips together.
- Next, ask that one partner close their eyes (no peaking!)
- Have the person without their eyes closed lead their partner with their eyes closed around the room without running into objects in the room, while they continue touching all 10 fingertips. It is ok for the partners to talk to each other.
- After a few minutes, when couples came back into view on the video, ask the partners to exchange roles. Now the other partner should close their eyes and be led around the room again.

Page 30: Ask for Examples (Slide 5)

Ask: What are some examples of feelings, thoughts, and actions that can support a relationship? (**Slide 5**)

Because many participants may be visual learners, it will be helpful to provide a way for couples to see the responses shared. Also, the ideas shared will be helpful for the next workbook activity. In place of a flip chart, utilize the whiteboard tool in Zoom or share a blank PowerPoint slide (blank templates are available with the curriculum).

Create three columns to record responses: Feelings, Thoughts, Actions. While one facilitator is engaging and calling on couples, another facilitator can share the "virtual flip chart" and record responses shared for all to see. Couples can also share responses using the chat feature. Leave the chart up for the participants to reference during the workbook activity that follows.



SPECIAL NOTE

If one of the partners is unable to walk, they could still provide instructions to their partner who is walking around the room with their eyes closed.



MODULE 3: LAY THE FOUNDATION



Page 35: Action Plan (Slide 14)

While participants are completing their **Action Plan**, share the PowerPoint slide or MS Word (or like) document where you summarized the participants' expectations (from Module 1). Review the expectations and identify which expectations were met during this session/class.

Also, use this opportunity to highlight some of the expectations that will be addressed during the next session/class as a way to encourage participants to attend.

Module 4: Enlighten

Virtual Adaptations



Page 38: Icebreaker: Pass the Word (Slide 1)

Before getting started, the following icebreaker game can promote participant engagement by providing an opportunity for couples to get to know each other.

- Ask couples to update their display name to include both partner's first name.
- Begin the activity by holding an imaginary ball. You will describe how you are feeling, in the moment, with one word.
- Afterwards, you will "toss the ball" to one of the participants/ couples through the screen and say the name of that participant/couple.
- That participant will "catch" the ball, describe how they are feeling, and toss the ball to their partner.
- Next, the partner will toss the ball to another participant/ couple.
- Continue this until each couple has had an opportunity to share. Remember, keep it to one word, and keep it moving.

This activity will provide you an opportunity gauge how participants are feeling going into this class. It will also help you, your team, and the participants learn names and feel more connected. The participants are more likely to engage in the discussion during class if they both know and feel comfortable with the others, and if they feel known and accepted.

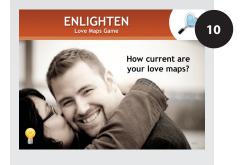
Page 43: Love Maps (Slide 10)

Facilitating this activity on-line will require additional attention to providing clear instructions. In addition to the instructions provided on page 43, prepare the activity as follows:

- Prior to this lesson it may be helpful to prepare a PowerPoint slide or MS Word (or like) document that includes the questions you will ask. If you decide to show this slide/file to the couples, be sure not to show all of the questions at one time; show them one-at-a-time as you ask the questions. Alternatively, you can copy/paste the questions (as asked) into the chat box (e.g., "Partner 1: What is Partner 2's favorite food?").
- Have couples identify who is 'partner one' and who is 'partner two' by asking each participant to hold up, within video camera view, one finger if they are 'partner one' or two fingers if they are 'partner two'.



special Note
If you decide
to open each
session with a 1-2
mindfulness practice, this
icebreaker could be an
excellent follow-up and
way to check-in.



Action Plan What do you plan

to do?

Love Maps (continued)

- Ask participants to use the NOTES pages located at the end of their workbook, or use scrap paper, to write down their answers. Remind them, no peeking or showing each other their answers until it's time.
- As you read each question, pause and ask participants to give you a "thumbs up" when they have finished writing their answer. Ask your co-facilitators/support staff to monitor the videos and let you know if anyone needs extra time.
- After both partners have recorded their answers, confirm that couples are muted before proceeding to the last instruction provided on page 43. This way, as you repeat each question, couples can share and process their responses in private.

Page 46: Action Plan (Slide 13)

While participants are completing their **Action Plan**, share the PowerPoint slide or MS Word (or like) document where you summarized the participants' expectations (from Module 1). Review the expectations and identify which expectations were met during this session/class.

Also, use this opportunity to highlight some of the expectations that will be addressed during the next session/class as a way to encourage participants to attend.

Graduation Preparation

This would be a good time to begin asking couples to email or text you photographs of them having fun together and/or practicing the skills they learned. For example:

"This week, as you spend time together, especially if you are working together on practicing the skills we learned today and/or are going through your Elevate workbook, take a selfie and text or email it to me."

Explain that you would like to use the photographs for a special presentation you are preparing for the last class, and you would love to have pictures from everyone (if they are comfortable sharing).

To add some music to the slide show presentation you create with the photographs, you could also ask couples to send you one of their favorite songs that has special meaning to them and their relationship. You could also play some of these songs at the start of each class as you admit couples into the virtual classroom.

Module 5: Value Virtual Adaptations



Page 48: Loving-Kindness (Slide 1)

Before starting the **Loving-Kindness** mindfulness practice, be sure that each participant's audio is muted (except for the facilitator guiding couples through the mindfulness practice). Background music is not necessary, but if you have some soft music (with no words) and are able to play it on your computer, feel free to do so; just keep the volume low so the music does not distract from the guided mindfulness practice. Read the instructions as provided in the manual.

Also, this would be a good time to invite participants to turn off their video and just listen. You could say something like: "We invite you to turn off your video during this activity, to minimize distractions, and we (the facilitators) will also turn off our video." Then, after the activity, say something like: "When you are ready, we invite you to turn back on your video to let us know you are ready to discuss (or move on to the next thing, etc.)..."

Page 55: Action Plan (Slide 9)

While participants are completing their **Action Plan**, share the PowerPoint slide or MS Word (or like) document where you summarized the participants' expectations (from Module 1). Review the expectations and identify which expectations were met during this session/class. Also, use this opportunity to highlight some of the expectations that will be addressed during the next session/class as a way to encourage participants to attend.

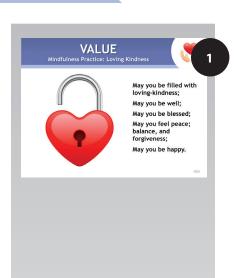
Graduation Preparation

Remind couples to email or text you photographs of them having fun together and/or practicing the skills they learned. For example:

"Like last week, as you spend time together and as you practice the skills we learned today and/or go through your Elevate workbook, take a selfie and text or email it to me."

Explain that you would like to use the photographs for a special presentation you are preparing for the last class, and you would love to have pictures from everyone (if they are comfortable sharing).

Also, to add some music to the slide show presentation you create with the photographs, you could also ask couples to send you one of their favorite songs that has special meaning to them and their relationship.





Module 6: Attach

Virtual Adaptations





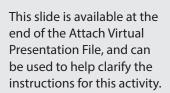
SPECIAL NOTE

Be sure to practice this in advance with your co-facilitators and support staff!



ATTACH Guess that phrase!

- Take out Relationship Wheel or turn to page 7 in workbook.
- Volunteer couple will have video spotlighted or pinned.
- The facilitator will provide the volunteer couple a phrase via private chat.
- While <u>muted</u>, say the phrase directly into the video camer for all to see (but not hear).
- 5. Everyone "guess that phrase!"



Page 58: Icebreaker - "Guess that Phrase" (Slide 1)

After the opening introduction (**Slide 1**), and <u>before</u> transitioning to **Slide 2**, consider the following icebreaker activity as a way to engage participants online, review concepts from prior classes, and introduce one of the concepts that will be covered in this module. As you walk through the instructions, demonstrate how to play the game with one of the cofacilitators. Be mindful of the time; you don't want this activity to go longer than **3-4 minutes**.

Optional Activity (Guess That Phrase)

- First, ask participants to take out their Relationship Wheel [or refer to page 7 in their workbook if they do not have wheels]. This is important because they will need to refer to the wheel to play the game.
- Explain to participants that couples will be asked shortly to volunteer. If chosen, everyone else in the class should locate that couple's video and then select the "pin video" option in Zoom (you may need to explain how this is done). This will allow the participants to see a bigger version of the volunteering couple during the game. For the first round, ask participants to "pin" the co-facilitator's video. Alternatively, the host can use "spotlight video" which puts a participant as the primary active speaker for all participants in the class.
- Next, the facilitator will provide the volunteer a phrase via private chat message. (Alternatively, you could ask your support staff to help out and provide the phrase in the private message to the volunteer instead). Explain that the phrase will be an abbreviated version (about 4-5 words) of the skills covered so far in the program. (If preferred, you can narrow the phrases to the last module, Value.) Provide them one verbal example such as "Eat healthy and exercise regularly" from Empower Yourself. Clarify that when the volunteer receives the phrase, they should not say it out loud; not yet!
- Once the phrase has been shared with the volunteer in a private chat message, the volunteer should be muted (facilitator can do this). Once muted, the facilitator will ask the volunteer to speak the phrase out loud and directly into the video camera for all to see (but not hear, since the volunteer is muted). Ask the volunteer to pause for a moment after reading the phrase, and then restate the phrase. Repeat this for 20 seconds. Ask the co-facilitator to demonstrate with their phrase.

MODULE 6: ATTACH

Icebreaker - "Guess that Phrase" (continued)

- During the 20 seconds, the other participants will try to "guess" that phrase." It's ok to look at the Relationship Wheel or page 7 in the workbook. They can either guess the phrase by typing it in the chat box (for everyone to see) or by speaking it out loud (be sure they are unmuted).
- Once someone guesses the phrase correctly (or is close), call another volunteer. This can be played a few rounds, but be mindful of the time; you don't want this activity to go longer than 3-4 minutes.
- Now that you are ready to start the game, ask couples to raise their hand (by selecting the "raise hand" option in Zoom) if they would like to volunteer to read the phrase.

[Close the activity and transition back to the lesson by saying something like this:]

Clearly, it's hard to understand each other when we can't process all of the information (especially the words being spoken). While we had fun trying to "guess the phrase," this can be frustrating or stressful in relationships. Shortly we will describe filters that impact how we communicate with each other, and explore ways to nurture positive interactions that promote friendship in our relationships.

[Advance to Slide 2, and continue on page 58 in the manual]

ATTACH eaningful time together **Build** couple Nurture positive interactions

Page 59: Ways You Spend Time Together? (Slide 3)

Ask: What are some of the ways you like to spend your time together?

In place of a flip chart, utilize the whiteboard tool in Zoom or share a blank PowerPoint slide (blank templates are available with the curriculum). Being able to see the ideas shared can provide couples new ways to spend time together. Encourage couples to take a photo of the list if they like.



MODULE 6: ATTACH





VIDEO

The Importance of Nonverbal Cues as Told by Friends (4:32 MINUTES)

Download from www.nermen.org/ELEVATE.php

Original Source: https://youtu.be/OvEci5Bjgd4



Page 64: "Dude" Activity (Slide 9)

The **"Dude"** activity may yield a different reaction online. Inperson, because all participants can hear how others say the word "dude," it almost always results in laughter. Online, because of the features of Zoom (or like), only one participant can be heard at a time and thus participants are not able to hear others say the word "dude."

One option is to have the co-facilitator unmuted and say the word "dude" after each statement the lead facilitator reads while participants are muted, but still participating in the activity as well. This way everyone still hears the different ways "dude" is said in response to each statement, and you can see how participants are responding.

An alternative is to share the video clip, "The Importance of Nonverbal Cues as Told by Friends". A slide with the video is available at the end of the Attach Virtual Presentation File. The video clip illustrates different verbal and non-verbal cues in communication using clips from the TV Show "Friends." The video would take the place of slides 9-13.

After the video, continue to **Slide 14** with this slightly modified transition: "As you can see, the meaning of our words changes dramatically based on how we say our words." [Continue with remaining script on page 64.]

Page 64: Ask (Slide 14)

Ask: What do you think influences how we communicate with each other?

Explain to the couples that as participants verbally share their examples, the co-facilitator (or support staff) will document the examples in the chat box. By doing this (instead of having participants type their own examples in the chat box), you reduce redundancy and make it possible for the list to appear in its entirety. This will make it easier to reference the examples as you describe the different filters illustrated on **Slide 15** of page 65.

MODULE 6: ATTACH

Page 68: Bids for Connection (Slide 20)

For the **Bids for Connection** activity, it may be helpful to put couples into their own separate breakout rooms in Zoom, or similar feature (if available) in another virtual platform. This topic is especially important for each couple to process and practice. Using the breakout rooms provides each couple some privacy (i.e., they can't been seen by others in the virtual classroom), and it provides a way for the facilitators (and support staff) to join their room, check-in to see how things are going, and answer any questions.

Page 69: Action Plan (Slide 21)

While participants are completing their **Action Plan**, share the PowerPoint slide or MS Word (or like) document where you summarized the participants' expectations (from Module 1). Review the expectations and identify which expectations were met during this session/class. Also, use this opportunity to highlight some of the expectations that will be addressed during the next session/class as a way to encourage participants to attend.

Graduation Preparation

Again, remind couples to email or text you photographs of them having fun together and/or practicing the skills they learned. For example:

"And, don't forget, as you spend time together and as you practice the skills we learned today and/or go through your Elevate workbook, take a selfie and text or email it to me."

Explain that you would like to use the photographs for a special presentation you are preparing for the last class, and you would love to have pictures from everyone (if they are comfortable sharing).

Also, to add some music to the slide show presentation you create with the photographs, you could also ask couples to send you one of their favorite songs that has special meaning to them and their relationship.



SPECIAL NOTE

Note, if you plan to join their breakout room to check-in, be sure to mention this to all of the couples before assigning them to breakout rooms.



Module 7: Tame

Virtual Adaptations







Page 72: Ask Questions (Slides 1 and 2)

Ask: What are the top things that couples argue about? And, where/how do we learn to handle conflict?

Ask questions (from page 72) on a PowerPoint slide that they can all see (blank templates are available with the curriculum). Do not use the chat feature to post the questions - participants who join the Zoom classroom after you post the questions will not be able to see it in their chat box.

Put something like this on the slide:

Today, we are going to elevate the way we manage conflict. Every relationship has conflict.

- What do you think are the top things that couples argue about?
- And, where/how do we learn to handle conflict?

Share your ideas in the chat box.

When everyone has joined the class, open with (**Slide 1**) on page 72 in the manual and share the responses participants posted in the chat for the first **Ask** question. Next, transition to the second Ask question, and read those responses to the group (add responses as needed). This will help get everyone engaged as they arrive. Also, because this is a longer module, it will help move the discussion along.



Page 73: Stress Bottle Demonstration (Slide 3)

Before beginning the stress bottle demonstration, explain to users how to utilize the "Pin Video" feature in Zoom. Ask them to pin your (or your co-facilitator's) video. Alternatively, the host can spotlight the facilitator's video so that it is the primary video for all participants in the class. This will allow for participants to better see what is being demonstrated by you or your co-facilitator.

Be sure your "stress bottle" is clearly visible to participants (e.g., use a large, clear bottle of water with dark glitter). For guidance on what the bottle should look like, watch the training video available online for "Page 73: Getting Worked Up."

MODULE 7: TAME

Page 74: Ask - "What did you Observe?" (Slide 5)

Ask: What did you observe in their interactions that can be harmful to sustaining a lasting, healthy marriage?

Explain to the couples that as participants verbally share their examples, the co-facilitator (or support staff) will document the examples in the chat box. By doing this (instead of having participants type their own examples in the chat box), you reduce redundancy and make it possible for the list to appear in its entirety. This will make it easier to reference the examples as you describe the different types of "anger [mis]management" illustrated on **Slide 6** of page 75.

Page 77: Attitude Change (Slide 8)

Before starting the **Attitude Change** mindfulness practice, be sure that each participant's audio is muted (except for the facilitator guiding couples through the mindfulness practice). Background music is not necessary, but if you have some soft music (with no words) and are able to play it on your computer, feel free to do so; just keep the volume low so the music does not distract from the guided mindfulness practice. Read the instructions as provided in the manual.

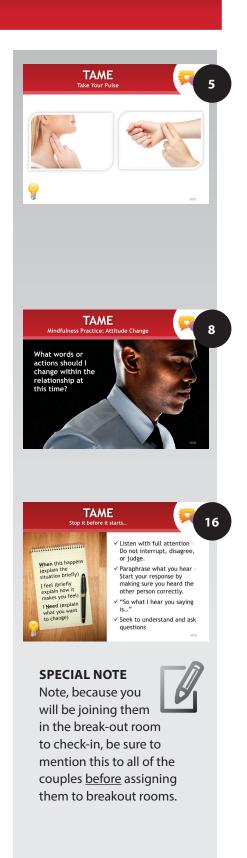
Also, this would be a good time to invite participants to turn off their video and just listen. You could say something like: "We invite you to turn off your video during this activity, to minimize distractions, and we (the facilitators) will also turn off our video." Then, after the activity, say something like: "When you are ready, we invite you to turn back on your video to let us know you are ready to discuss (or move on to the next thing, etc.)..."

Page 82: Apply Skills to Discussing Trigger Slide 16)

For this activity, it may be helpful to put couples into their own separate breakout rooms in Zoom, or similar feature (if available) in another virtual platform.

Practicing the W.I.N. approach is especially important, but may be difficult for couples. During an in-person program, facilitators would walk around the room to check-in with each couple and help them apply the W.I.N. approach appropriately.

In this virtual format, using the breakout rooms provides each couple some privacy (i.e., they can't be seen by others in the virtual classroom), and it allows facilitators (and support staff) an opportunity to join their room, check-in to see how things are going, coach the couples through the process, and answer any questions.





Page 84: Action Plan (Slide 19)

While participants are completing their **Action Plan**, share the PowerPoint slide or MS Word (or like) document where you summarized the participants' expectations (from Module 1). Review the expectations and identify which expectations were met during this session/class.

Also, use this opportunity to highlight some of the expectations that will be addressed during the next session/class as a way to encourage participants to attend.

Graduation Preparation

Remind couples one last time to email or text you photographs of them having fun together and/or practicing the skills they learned. For example:

"Last call! Text or email me your selfies of you spending time together and/or practicing the skills you have learned. To include your picture in the special presentation I am preparing for our last class, I need it by [DATE]."

Also, to add some music to the slide show presentation you create with the photographs, you could also ask couples to send you one of their favorite songs that has special meaning to them and their relationship.

Module 8: Engage (& Wrap Up)

Virtual Adaptations



Page 87: Connections (Slide 4)

In a virtual format, the **Connections** group activity cannot be done as described in the manual. Instead, engage participants in a group discussion for each topic and set of questions presented on **Slides 5-7**. By now, rapport among participants should be strong and, thus, participants will feel comfortable sharing during this discussion.

To effectively manage the discussion, and to provide all participants an opportunity to share, use an "imaginary ball" that participants "toss" to each other.

- Ask couples to update their display name to include both partner's first name.
- To start, hold the imaginary ball in your hand near the video camera, call on a couple, and toss the ball to them through the video camera.
- That couple "catches" the ball and then each partner shares their response to the question.
- Afterwards, they call on another couple, and toss the ball to them.
- Repeat this process until all couples have had an opportunity to share. Then, either allow for another round of sharing or proceed to the next slide/question.

Determine how many rounds per question are needed based on the number of couples, the number of examples that you want couples to share, and the time available.

As well, depending on the size of your class, you may need to split the group up into smaller breakout rooms (e.g., 8-10 couples per breakout room). If you use breakout rooms:

- Assign one facilitator (or support staff) to each room to help facilitate the discussion and to take notes.
- Before sending couples to their breakout room, show the slide, review the question, and clearly describe the instructions.
- Also, set a timer so that each group knows when to come back to the main room.
- When back, have each facilitator/support staff summarize the ideas that were shared in their group.
- Repeat this process for each question in the Connection activity (i.e., Parts 1, 2, and 3).



SPECIAL NOTE As noted in the manual, remind couples to (a) keep their example to about 10-20 seconds so that everyone has a turn, and (b) to describe who provides support and how they provide support.

MODULE 8: ENGAGE





For **Connections (Part 1),** you can have couples share with the group as described above.

Alternatively, you can use class time to provide couples an opportunity to start **Growing Family Connections** in their workbook on page 57.

- First, provide participants about two-three minutes to fill out their own worksheet.
- When done, provide participants about three-four minutes to discuss their responses with their partner (or reflect individually if there is no partner present).
- Afterwards, ask participants to share examples with the group.
- Close by encouraging couples to complete this worksheet at home.





Page 89: Connections, Parts 2 and 3 (Slides 6 and 7)

For **Connections (Part 2 and Part 3)**, have couples share with the group as described on page 89. This is a great opportunity for participants to learn about local, community resources that they can turn to for additional support (as needed) as well as community organizations where they can volunteer to support others. And, remember, be sure to let couples know about Cooperative Extension!

Page 91: Connections, Part 4 (Slide 9)

This last part of the Connections activity provides couples a fun visualization of how important a strong network of support can be to families. It's ok that they won't have this same opportunity during the virtual program. Importantly, do NOT tell the couples that they are "missing out" by not doing this activity. Remember, make the virtual program experience great for your couples!

To conclude the Connections activity, facilitate a discussion to process the key take-away points. For example:

- "How does it feel when family and friends provide support?"
- "How does this support help strengthen your relationship?"

Conclude by emphasizing the key points provided with each **Ask** question on page 91.

Page 92: Action Plan (Slide 10)

While participants are completing their **Action Plan**, share the PowerPoint slide or MS Word (or like) document where you summarized the participants' expectations (from Module 1). Review the expectations. If all of the expectations have been met, highlight this to the group! If expectations remain on the list, ask participants to share ideas on ways the skills covered in the program can help couples achieve those expectations.

Page 93: Virtual Graduation (Slide 11)

The program has come to an end, and the couples have learned so much - celebrate!

Prior to this last class, you hopefully received at least one photograph from each couple, and you have prepared a PowerPoint presentation that includes those photographs (with the couples' names), and the presentation is set to play with some fun "graduation-type" music or songs that couples sent you.

After playing the graduation video/presentation, allow for some final comments to be shared by the co-facilitators (and support staff) as well as by the couples.

Congratulations on a successful virtual program!



NOTES	