

Happy Happy Marriage Groups

# Facilitator Guide



[HappyHappyMarriage.org](http://HappyHappyMarriage.org)

# Contents

3 - 5	Tips for Leading Your Marriage Small Groups
6 - 8	Session 1: Introduction
9	Ground Rules
10	My 4 Habits Joy Assessment
11 - 12	Session 2: Play Together
13 - 14	Session 3: Listen for Emotion
15 - 16	Session 4: Appreciate Daily
17 - 18	Session 5: Nurture a Rythm
19 - 20	Session 6: Closing - Where We Go from Here

# Tips for Leading Your Marriage Small Group

Congratulations! You are on your way to leading couples through a 6-week group experience that can grow joy, deepen connection, and strengthen marriages! Here are a few things to keep in mind as you prepare to lead your group:

## Prayerfully Prepare

- Watch the **Facilitator Video** and the **Teaching Video** for that week
- Read through that week's **Facilitator Guide**
- Read through the related readings in the **4 Habits book**
- **Send a reminder** to attendees with details for the meeting (location, time, any homework for that week, etc.)
- **Pray** for your group members and the coming meeting!

## Create a Comfortable Environment

Minimize distractions and create a warm, welcoming environment. Here are a few things to consider as you prepare the meeting space:

- Seating for couples, including space for practicing exercises
- Temperature & Lighting
- Possible refreshments
- Someone to welcome people as they arrive

## Encourage Discussion

Aim to have a relational dynamic that includes the following elements:

- **Encourage Participation:** Encourage everyone to participate by asking questions, sharing responses, etc.
- **Don't allow anyone to dominate** the conversation (even you, the Facilitator!). If someone talks too long, you may need to break in and thank them for their thoughts, then move on to the next question for sake of time.
- **Affirm and/or Summarize:** Seek to affirm something that was said in each response, or summarize what was said before asking someone else to share.
- **Use Follow Up Questions:** Foster conversation by asking how others have experienced similar things to what was shared, when appropriate.
- **Silence can be Golden.** Don't be afraid of silence! Often people need a few moments to think of their response or gain courage to share what is on their hearts.

## Tips on What to Do When....

- **Over talkers** – If someone regularly over talks in the group, you can ...
  - Give a reminder that it is best to allow everyone in the group opportunity to respond to questions and share in the discussion. Ask group members to respect others by limiting their answers and responses to 2 minutes.
  - Direct the conversation away from them by making a statement like, “This question is for someone who hasn’t answered a question before...”, then, ask the question.
  - If you have someone you know isn’t afraid to answer a question but hasn’t spoken too much, you could direct the question at him/her by calling his/her name. “Thomas, what did you discover...?”
  - If one person is persistently talking too much, you may need to have a conversation with that person outside of the weekly meeting to thank them for their courage to speak up then ask them to help others grow by limiting his/her input to allow others more opportunity to share.
- **Under talkers** – If someone does not talk, or only gives short answers...
  - Remember introverts learn by the example of others and not merely by opening up. Encourage everyone to answer/respond but don’t force it.
  - Be aware there are likely deeper issues beneath the surface in every marriage represented and some people/couples will tend to shy away from answering/responding openly if they are struggling with the topic or exercise at-hand. Again, give opportunity but don’t push the issue. Safety in groups happens as we are tender towards weaknesses and sensitive to the preferences of others.
- **Unkind Remarks** – If a person speaks negatively about their spouse...
  - Step in and affirm how these habits and exercises may reveal areas in our marriages that require extra attention, and negative comments about our spouse may be indicators of these areas needing additional work. Encourage each person to be self-aware of what is happening to them during the group time and to write their thoughts on paper rather than express them to the group, especially if they are negative. Then, during the week, speak with your spouse privately about what you wrote down (if needed).
  - We want our groups to be solution-centered instead of problem-focused. Step in and redirect the conversation to the positive habit each couple is trying to instill in their marriage. You might say, “As we are making our way through this material and working together to form positive habits that will bring more joy into our marriages, we might find it hard at times to avoid some pain or problems in the relationship. Please, remember that our ability to deal with the pains and problems in marriage is directly related to our capacity for joy. Let’s try and keep the focus on the habit we are forming and build the capacity to handle those things later.
- **Big emotions/problems arise** – If big problems or emotions arise in a meeting...
  - This calls for a redirect, fast! One suggestion is to say something like, “Boom! Powder

keg! It's ok...we all have these moments, when our buttons get pushed and our emotions erupt. The key is to recognize what is happening and take a short break to quiet our thoughts and emotions to regain our ability to remain relational. And, while there may be an issue here that needs attention, the time at-hand requires us all to focus on...(whatever the topic or question is at the moment)."

- **Tangents** – If someone goes on a tangent or asks questions that are not related to the topic at hand, you can ...
  - Jump in when the person takes a breath and say something like, "Susan, thank you for opening up to the group (or sharing this insight) but our limited time won't allow us to follow this trail. We must stay on the path to developing these 4 habits that increase joy in our marriages. (Then, restate the topic or question to be addressed...)"

## Additional Tips

- **Manage Time Well:** The group is designed to run for 90 minutes. Of course, you are welcome to promote and run it as a 2-hour small group if so desired. The key is to keep track of time and ensure you start and end near the agreed upon time.
- **Relational Pain Will Arise:** Some marriages in the group will have some longstanding pain or problems that may come up in the group. These will often be accompanied with big emotions and may be expressed in less than ideal ways. When that happens, be sure to attune to the pain and validate how big it is. Use your voice tone and language to express that you 'see' them and care. If appropriate, offer to pray a brief prayer on the spot, or mention that you'll be praying for them about this issue. But gently and clearly redirect the group back to the topic at hand.
  - Depending on the issues raised, you may wish to reach out to the individual/couple outside the group and brainstorm with them options for how to deal with longstanding or painful issues (e.g., seeking counseling or pastoral care, etc.). Let them know you are for them and their marriage, and that you are glad they are in the group to build joy strength as part of (but not the only thing necessary for) the healing process.
  - If things are really hard for the couples, encourage some quieting to calm big emotions and invite them to care for themselves if they need a breather.
- **Counseling Referrals:** If and as appropriate, you can let people in your group know of counselors or coaches to help strengthen the marriage.

# Session 1: Introduction

## Preparing for the Meeting

- Email a reminder of the meeting's location, time, parking info, etc. Ask them to read **Chapter 1** in the "4 Habits" book before the first meeting.
- Review "Tips for Leading Your Marriage Small Group" and watch the **Facilitator** and **Teaching Video** for this week
- **Print copies of the Joy Assessment** and bring to this week's meeting.
- Have some **music** ready to play during the exercise.

## SAMPLE SCHEDULE

### 7:00-7:02p 🕒 (2 min) – Welcome & Introduce Yourself

Give a warm welcome to the group; Introduce yourself as Facilitator (e.g., name, how long you've been married,) and share what you are looking forward to about being in this group.

### 7:02-7:10p 🕒 (8 min) – Couple Introductions (*optional*)

Have each couple share their names, where they live and work, and what they are looking forward to about being part of this group.

### 7:10-7:12p 🕒 (2 min) – Go Over the Weekly Group Format

- Welcome
- Watch 25-30 min video together
  - Teaching on one of the 4 habits
  - Presenters discuss how that habit has helped their marriage
  - Joy-building exercise explained and demonstrated
- Discussion questions for the group
- Reintroduction of the exercise & time to practice as a couple
- Regroup and exercise debrief
- Explain exercises to do at home that week

### 7:12-7:16p 🕒 (4 min) – Read through "Marriage Small Group Ground Rules"

### 7:16-7:17p 🕒 (1 min) – Ask if there are Questions or Comments

## 7:17-7:46p 🕒 (29 min) – Play Session 1 Video

## 7:46-8:00p 🕒 (14 min\*) – 2-3 Discussion Questions

Now it's time to open up discussion on the video. You may want to jot down some questions as you watch the video. Here are a few questions to consider using:

- What stood out to you from this video? (Often this is all you'll need to get the conversation up and going!)
- Marcus mentioned that when our joy is high, our emotional capacity (the ability to bounce back from difficult emotions or hard situations) is high. Can someone describe a time when they had high joy and noticed that everything else in life seemed a lot easier to handle as well?
- Marcus mentioned that it makes a big difference to remember that “we” are more important than any problem we are facing. What are some ideas you'd like to try to help you remember that your relationship is more important than the problem?”

## 8:00-8:05p 🕒 (5 min): Hand out the ‘Joy Assessment’

This assessment is an opportunity for each person to gauge their current joy levels. They don't have to share their results with their spouse or anyone else. Tell them not to be concerned if some numbers are low. This is an opportunity for encouragement as they'll take this again at the last meeting. Over the next 6 weeks they'll be actively growing joy in their marriage and should see these numbers increase!

## 8:05-8:20p 🕒 (15 min): Couples Practice “Resting & Kissing” Exercise

Here you'll briefly reintroduce this week's exercise (from Appendix 4, p.133). Decreasing the ‘Joy Gap’ in marriage requires noticing when joy and rest are needed, and experiencing these together. Some of the exercises might feel awkward or a bit uncomfortable. This is not a bad thing! Sometimes something different is what we need. Remind them that even if it feels a bit awkward, they can know that this is changing their brain and deepening their marriage bond! Let them know that we'll skip the kissing step during group time, but encourage them to do this part of the exercise tonight in the privacy of their own home.

Have your timer handy and let them know you'll guide them through the steps. Encourage them to do what they are comfortable with, but remind them that no one is watching them, so this is their time and space to connect with their spouse.

Playing some calming music can help people feel less awkward during this exercise.

**Step 1: Cuddling 🕒 (3 min)** – Couples can move chairs and find a way to get comfortable and cuddle with one another. Invite people to breathe from their belly and try to rest (closing eyes might help). It helps for people to focus on what makes them feel peaceful and joyful.

**Step 2: Appreciation 🕒 (3 min)** – Next ask couples to hold hands and face each other. Invite

them to take turns highlighting the qualities they first observed in their spouse that made them fall in love. Encourage them to give examples of these qualities and to look at each other warmly. *[Thinking about the good moments allows our brain to respond as though we are re-living the moment all over again. Notice the energy in the room begin to increase as couples start to have fun.]*

**Step 3: Eye Smiles 🕒 (3 min)** – Ask couples to position themselves knee to knee and hold hands. Eye Smiles is one way to exchange joy and rest between pairs of people. The important point for successful eye smiles is to look away anytime rest is needed. This is not a stare down contest! Each person connects in joy, and once either of you feel the joy is no longer increasing, it is time to look away for a refresher. Rest always leads to more joy!

**Step 4: Cuddling 🕒 (2 min)** – Ask couples to get comfortable and cuddle again, taking some time to breathe deeply and rest together. This is an opportunity for an oxytocin charge, which is the bonding hormone that helps us feel connected, peaceful, generous and more trusting.

### **8:20-8:25p 🕒 (5 min\*): Exercise Debrief**

- E.g., “How did that go?” “What did you enjoy about this exercise?”

### **8:25-8:30p 🕒 (5 min): Assign Exercises for Week and Wrap Up**

- Remind them to take a few moments tonight to cuddle and finish the “kissing” part of the exercise (p.133)!
- Encourage them to do this exercise again 2x this week (p.133).
- Read Chapter 2 & 4, and review “Get Relational” exercise on p.64.
- Let them know that at the beginning of each meeting you’ll ask for testimonies of any signs of increased joy in their marriage.

---

**90 minutes** *(Note: in subsequent weeks you should have more time for discussion since 15 minutes of Week 1 were devoted to introductions, ground rules, etc.).*

## Marriage Small Group - Ground Rules

Here are some ground rules to review before and/or during your first meeting.

**Confidentiality:** What is said in the group stays in the group.

**Transformation is the Goal:** This group is not primarily about learning information, but about experiencing *transformation*. So we are asking for a high level of commitment from each person to practice the exercises at home and to show up on time for each of the 6 sessions.

**Life Happens:** That being said, we understand that sometimes “life happens,” and things get in the way. If you didn’t do the exercises, please come to the group that week anyway. If you know you will have to miss a session, please email your Facilitator in advance to let him/her know.

**Focus on Your Growth:** Each person is here to grow *their own* skills and habits, not to change someone else. Use “I” statements and talk about what you are learning or struggling with, not where your spouse needs to change.

**Building Strength vs. Solving Problems:** This group is not about fixing problems in marriage as much as it is about building joy and relational connection with each other. Problems may come up in group discussion, but we won’t focus on them. Instead, we’ll focus on learning and practicing these skills that can deepen our connection with our spouse.

**Sharing:** Be sensitive about the amount of time you share and how many times you share. If a person goes over 2 minutes or so, the Facilitator may interject to allow others a chance to share.

**Don’t Advise, but Attune:** We will refrain from giving advice or trying to fix people’s issues that come up. However, we will seek to ‘attune’ to people, showing that we hear them, we care about what they are going through, and we’re glad to be with them even in the difficult space they may be in.

**Extend Grace to Yourself & Others:** As we get to know each other we will all encounter weaknesses. We will treat our own and other’s weaknesses with kindness and compassion, understanding that we all have a backstory and good reasons for our challenges.

## My 4 Habits Joy Assessment

Note: Before taking this joy assessment, take a few moments to think about 3 qualities you enjoy about your spouse. This step activates your brain's relational circuits which will provide clarity as you think through each statement. Don't think too hard on each question; simply answer the number that feels best as you read the statement and don't worry if some numbers are too low. Over the next 6 weeks you should see your joy increase as you learn new habits!

1. I frequently look for opportunities to bring my spouse joy.  
(Not at all) **0 1 2 3 4 5** (So true)
2. I light up to see my spouse when he/she walks into the room.  
(Not at all) **0 1 2 3 4 5** (So true)
3. After a difficult day, I look forward to connecting with my spouse in the evening.  
(Not at all) **0 1 2 3 4 5** (So true)
4. I feel thankful for my spouse most of the time.  
(Not at all) **0 1 2 3 4 5** (So true)
5. I frequently feel gratitude after spending time with my spouse.  
(Not at all) **0 1 2 3 4 5** (So true)
6. During meals I enjoy telling my spouse good things from my day.  
(Not at all) **0 1 2 3 4 5** (So true)
7. I frequently look for things to enjoy about my spouse.  
(Not at all) **0 1 2 3 4 5** (So true)
8. Rest with my spouse is something I plan in my schedule.  
(Not at all) **0 1 2 3 4 5** (So true)
9. I frequently play with my spouse.  
(Not at all) **0 1 2 3 4 5** (So true)
10. I look for opportunities to make my spouse smile.  
(Not at all) **0 1 2 3 4 5** (So true)

Total Score \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Session 2: Play Together

## Preparing for the Meeting

- Email a reminder to read **Chapter 2 & 4**, and the “Get Relational” exercise (p.64) in the “4 Habits” book before this second meeting.
- Review “Tips for Leading Your Marriage Small Group” and watch the **Facilitator** and **Teaching Video** for this week.
- Have some **music** ready to play during the exercise.

## SAMPLE SCHEDULE

### 7:00-7:05p 🕒 (5 min) – Welcome

Give a warm welcome! Remind couples that at the beginning of each meeting you'll give an opportunity for people to share any positive results (increased joy) they're seeing in their marriage. Ask if anyone has an encouraging report to share!

Note: It may be helpful to point out that joy often sneaks up on us. *Practicing these exercises consistently over time allows our brain and marriage bond to deepen in joy.* Often we want to see immediate results. But in this group we are trying to “lean into” exercises to create new habits, and this takes time. A good analogy is preparing to climb a mountain. We wouldn't simply sprint up the side of a mountain but would begin with short distance climbs designed to increase our stamina, grow our muscles, and bolster our endurance. As we climb higher up the mountain each time, we pause to look back and enjoy how far we've come! So, with the exercises we take our time, we practice each step with a bigger, broader goal in mind and over time we notice something deep and profound is beginning to take place.

### 7:05-7:10p 🕒 (5 min) – Review from Last Week

Check and see if anyone has input or questions from what was covered last week (the teaching or exercise). You can ask for feedback on how the homework (kissing exercise) went. If a question comes up about this weeks' material, it's up to you whether to discuss now or wait until after the video.

### 7:10-7:37p 🕒 (27 min) – Play Session 2 Video

### 7:37-8:00p 🕒 (23 min) – 2-3 Discussion Questions

- What stood out to you from this video?
- What surprised you about the brain science behind joy?
- What are some social routines (e.g., date night) or special events (e.g., hiking) that you enjoyed when you were dating or first married?
- What practical take-aways can you implement from the video?

### 8:00-8:15p 🕒 (15 min): Couples Practice “Get Relational” Exercise

Here you'll briefly reintroduce this week's exercise (from Chapter 4, pg. 64). This is about connecting relationally by sharing specific qualities you appreciate about your spouse. It begins with quiet (low energy state), then sharing joy (appreciation), then back to quiet together.

**Note:** Playing some calming music can help this exercise be less awkward.

**Step 1: Comfortably Connect 🕒 (3 min)** – Couples can move chairs and find a way to comfortably hold hands while facing each other. Invite them to take some time to breathe from their belly and think about what qualities they enjoy about their spouse. Encourage them to try and recall specific examples where these qualities were demonstrated. (Give them ~2 min to think before moving to the next step).

**Step 2: Share Appreciation 🕒 (3 min)** – Instruct couples to look into their beloved's eyes and share the qualities they enjoy and appreciate in their spouse, and to try to include moments they observed these qualities in action.

**Step 3: Describe How it Felt 🕒 (3 min)** – Instruct couples to notice how they felt when they were giving and receiving appreciation. Try to put words to not only emotions, but also physical sensations in the body. Try to answer the question, "If I stood in your shoes right now, what would I be feeling?" This helps couples notice the positive effects of appreciation, and engages the part of our brain that influences identity and character.

**Step 4: Kissing 🕒 (1 min to explain)** – Let couples know that we'll skip the kissing step during group time, but encourage them to do this part of the exercise tonight at home! You may want to point out that, depending on a person's wiring, some people enjoy high-energy kissing while others prefer restful, low-energy kissing. The goal is to stay connected and attuned with each other, being sensitive to the needs and desires of your spouse.

**Step 5: Cuddling 🕒 (4 min)** – Ask couples to choose a way to get comfortable and cuddle, taking some time to breathe deeply and rest together. This is an opportunity for an oxytocin charge, which is the bonding hormone that helps us feel connected, peaceful, generous and more trusting.

### **8:15-8:25p 🕒 (5-10 min): Exercise Debrief**

E.g., "How did that go?" "What did you enjoy and notice about this exercise?"

### **8:25-8:30p 🕒 (5 min): Assign Exercises for Week and Wrap Up**

- Remind couples to take a few moments tonight to connect, share some appreciation, and finish the "kissing" part of the exercise (p. 64).
- Encourage couples to practice the 5 exercises at the end of Chapter 4, Habit #1, (p. 59-65). Pick one each evening to practice and then repeat your favorites!
- Read Chapters 3 & 5, and review "Joy Reminiscing" exercise (p.84) for next week.

# Session 3: Listen for Emotion

## Preparing for the Meeting

- Email a reminder to read **Chapters 3 & 5**, and the “Joy Reminiscing” exercise (p.84) in the “4 Habits” book before this third meeting.
- Review “Tips for Leading Your Marriage Small Group” and watch the **Facilitator** and **Teaching Video** for this week.
- Have some **music** ready to play during the exercise.

## SAMPLE SCHEDULE

### 7:00-7:05p 🕒 (5 min) – Welcome

Give a warm welcome to the group. Remind couples that at the beginning of each meeting you'll give an opportunity to share any positive results (increased joy) they're seeing in their marriage. Ask if anyone has an encouraging report to share!

### 7:05-7:15p 🕒 (10 min) – Review from Last Week

Check and see if anyone has any input or questions from what was covered last week (the teaching and exercise). Ask how practicing the 5 exercises assigned last week (p. 59-65) went. Which one(s) went well? Which were fun? Any questions?

### 7:15-7:40p 🕒 (25 min) – Play Session 3 Video

### 7:40-8:00p 🕒 (20 min\*) – 2-3 Discussion Questions

- What stood out to you from this video?
- Let's talk about validating emotions. What is the difference between validating someone's emotions and agreeing with them? (Note: p.71 points out that validating doesn't mean agreeing with what someone is feeling, but simply acknowledging what they are feeling).
- Most of us tend to listen for *problems instead of the emotion behind the problem*. Can you share an example of a time you or someone else validated emotions before addressing problems? What happened?

### 8:00-8:15p 🕒 (15 min): Couples Practice “Joy Reminiscing” Exercise

Here you'll briefly reintroduce this week's exercise (from Chapter 5, pg. 84). This is about learning to pay attention to our bodies and emotions, as well as learning to listen for these important things in what others share with us. Validating others' emotions and experiences is powerful way to help deepen a relational connection!

**Note:** Playing some calming music during this exercise can be helpful.

**Step 1: Think Back** 🕒 (2 min) – Ask couples to think about a joyful memory with their spouse from the previous year. This can be a special trip, a date night, or a meaningful interaction. The goal is to feel some “glad to be together” joy that is comforting.

**Step 2: Note Details** 🕒 (2 min) – Once couples have a shared joy moment in mind, ask them to write down some details to highlight their stories. First, identify what they felt in their body, both during the shared memory, but also now as they remember the joy. Invite couples to “scan” their body and notice what they are feeling. Next, identify the emotions in the story. Were they feeling joyful, peaceful, excited, calm, or nervous? Have couples write these descriptions down so they can include them in their stories.

**Step 3: Reposition and Share** 🕒 (5 min) – Ask couples to reposition so they are holding hands and looking each other in the eyes. Have one person tell his/her story including the physical sensations and emotions they jotted down. When they’ve finished sharing, their spouse should move to Step 4 and validate the emotional content in the story. Then come back and repeat Step 3 and 4 for the other person.

**Step 4: Validate** 🕒 (3 min) – The listener responds to the story using validation to highlight the emotions and storyteller’s experience. This is a golden opportunity to help your partner feel connected and understood by emphasizing what the storyteller was feeling and experiencing in the story.

*Example: Our weekend getaway to the beach was a special time for you as you were feeling encouraged. Our time together helped you rest and relax so your body felt peaceful and your shoulders were no longer tense.*

**Step 5: Discuss & Quiet Together** 🕒 (3 min) – Now couples can discuss the exercise and highlight how it felt to both tell the story and receive validation in return. Invite couples to get comfortable and cuddle, taking some time to quiet and rest together.

### 8:15-8:25p 🕒 (5-10 min): Exercise Debrief

E.g., “How did that go?” “What did you enjoy about this exercise?”

### 8:25-8:30p 🕒 (5 min): Assign Exercises for Week and Wrap Up

- Encourage couples to take a few moments tonight to connect, share some appreciation, and do some “kissing” (e.g., Resting & Kissing, p.133).
- Encourage couples to practice the 5 exercises at the end of Chapter 5, Habit #2, (p. 81-88). Pick one each evening to practice and then repeat your favorites!
- For next week, review Chapter 3 & read Chapter 6. Also review “Triple Your Joy” exercise (p.99).

# Session 4: Appreciate Daily

## Preparing for the Meeting

- Email a reminder to review Chapter 3 & read Chapter 6, as well as review “Triple Your Joy” exercise (p.99) in the “4 Habits” book before this fourth meeting.
- Watch the **Facilitator** and **Teaching Video** for this week.
- Have some **music** ready to play during the exercise.

## SAMPLE SCHEDULE

### 7:00-7:05p 🕒 (5 min) – Welcome

Give a warm welcome to the group. Ask if anyone has an encouraging report to share from this past week!

### 7:05-7:10p 🕒 (5 min) – Review from Last Week

Check and see if anyone has input or questions from what was covered last week (the teaching and exercise). Ask how practicing the 5 exercises assigned last week (p. 81-88) went. Which one(s) went well? Which were fun? Any questions?

### 7:10-7:34p 🕒 (24 min) – Play Session 4 Video

### 7:34-7:55p 🕒 (21 min) – 2-3 Discussion Questions

- What stood out to you from this video?
- Share about someone you know who excels in appreciation. What do you notice about how this person exhibits appreciation in their life?
- Gratitude and appreciation have repeatedly been shown to bring enormous benefits. What are some ways you would like to grow in these things in your own life?

### 7:55-8:10p 🕒 (15 min): Couples Practice “Triple Your Joy” Exercise

Here you’ll briefly reintroduce this week’s exercise (from Chapter 6, pg. 99). This is about amplifying joy through extended appreciation. This should really get their relational circuits on, bring joy

**Note:** Playing some calming music during this exercise can be helpful.

**Step 1: Share Appreciation 🕒 (10 min)** – Couples can move chairs and find a way to comfortably hold hands while facing each other. Invite the group to take some time to breathe from their belly as they begin to think about the following areas of appreciation. Remind couples to look each other in the eye as they take turns sharing appreciation in each of the following three categories:

**Appreciation from my day:** Take turns sharing three highlights from your day. These are moments from the day that brought some joy and/or are things you are thankful for.

**Appreciation for my beloved:** Take turns sharing three things you appreciate about your spouse. Include an example for each quality.

**Appreciation for God (or your topic of choice):** Share three things you appreciate about God, or a topic you are excited about.

**Step 2: Debrief 🕒 (3 min)** – Next, ask the couples to notice how appreciation feels. Notice what changed from the beginning of the exercise to where they are now? We want couples to pay attention to the effects of appreciation and talk about it. This process trains our brain to begin to naturally scan the environment for good things to enjoy.

**Step 3: Quiet Together 🕒 (2 min)** – Now it's time to “coast to quiet,” following our joy with some rest. Ask couples to get comfortable and cuddle, taking some time to breathe deeply and rest together.

### **8:10-8:20p 🕒 (10 min): Exercise Debrief**

E.g., “How did that go?” “What did you notice and enjoy about this exercise?”

### **8:20-8:25p 🕒 (5 min): Assign Exercises for Week and Wrap Up**

- Encourage couples to take a few moments tonight to connect, share some appreciation, and do some “kissing” (e.g., Resting & Kissing, p.133).
- Encourage couples to practice the 3 exercises at the end of Chapter 6, Habit #3, (p. 98-101). Also pick 2 exercises from Appendix 3. Pick one each evening to practice and feel free to repeat your favorites!
- Review Chapter 3, read Chapter 7, and review “Finding Your Marriage Flavor” exercise (p.111) for next week.

# Session 5: Nurture a Rhythm

## Preparing for the Meeting

- Email a reminder to review Chapter 3 & read Chapter 7, as well as review “Finding Your Marriage Flavor” exercise (p.111) in the “4 Habits” book before this fifth meeting.
- Watch the **Facilitator** and **Teaching Video** for this week.
- Have some **music** ready to play during the exercise.

## SAMPLE SCHEDULE

### 7:00-7:05p 🕒 (5 min) – Welcome

Give a warm welcome to the group. Ask if anyone has an encouraging report to share from this past week!

### 7:05-7:10p 🕒 (5 min) – Review from Last Week

Check and see if anyone has input or questions from what was covered last week (the teaching and exercise). Ask how practicing the 5 exercises assigned last week (Ch.4 & Appendix 3) went. Which one(s) went well? Which were fun? Any questions?

### 7:10-7:36p 🕒 (26 min) – Play Session 5 Video

### 7:36-7:55p 🕒 (19 min) – 2-3 Discussion Questions

- What stood out to you from this video?
- What are some positive rhythms or habits (past or present) in your individual life? What are some of the advantages you've experienced from having this rhythm in place?
- What is a positive rhythm or habit you've seen in someone else's life or marriage that you would like to see developed in your own life?

### 7:55-8:13p 🕒 (18 min): Couples Practice “Finding Your Marriage Flavor” Exercise

Here you'll briefly introduce this week's exercise (from Chapter 7, pg. 111).

**Note:** Playing some calming music during this exercise can be helpful.

**Step 1: Share Appreciation** 🕒 (2 min) – Couples can move chairs and get comfortable. Invite them to take some deep belly breaths and to share 1-2 highlights from their day. This step activates the brain's *relational circuits* which will help couples better engage in joyful interaction.

**Step 2: This is Us** 🕒 (10 min) – Next, invite couples to discuss the following topics:

**First is what they like about their marriage.** Here is a time to amplify what each person enjoys about their marriage. For example, “I really like that we value quality time together!” Or, “I like that we are the kind of people who care deeply about our relationship...” Note, this is not the time to discuss what they don’t like about their marriage. It is important to caution couples to avoid using the word “but,” or use this as an opportunity to talk about pain. Couples should notice how they feel after talking about qualities they enjoy in their marriage.

**Next, couples should discuss the unique flavor in their marriage.** These are important characteristics of their marriage that stand out to the couple: “I like that we *are the kind of people who* value relationships and prioritize time with each other and the people we love...” etc.

**Last, couples should think about what they want to see when they look back on their life, particularly their marriage.** You can ask, “What kinds of things do you want to see when you near the end of your life and you look back on your time with your beloved? What do you want people to say about your marriage, particularly about what you valued in each other? What kind of marriage legacy do you want to leave?” For example, couples might report, “I want to say we finished well, and I want my spouse to feel that I loved him/her with all my heart; I held nothing back...”

**Step 2: Eye Smiles 🕒 (3 min)** – Next, have the couples practice the eye smiles exercise using the “connect and rest” sequence. Ask couples to get comfortable, sitting knee to knee and hold hands. Remind them to try and notice when one or both need a breather, and look away when they feel the joy is no longer building. *Joy grows best after we are refreshed with rest* – so don’t force it! (It is especially helpful to have music playing during this part, if it is not already).

**Step 3: Debrief & Quiet Together 🕒 (3 min)** – Invite couples to hold each other and discuss what they noticed in this exercise, then take a few moments for rest and quiet together.

### **8:13-8:23p 🕒 (10 min): Exercise Debrief**

E.g., “How did that go?” “What did you enjoy about this exercise?”

### **8:23-8:28p 🕒 (5 min): Assign Exercises for Week and Wrap Up**

- Encourage couples to take a few moments tonight to connect, share some appreciation, and do some “kissing” (e.g., Resting & Kissing, p.133).
- Encourage couples to practice the 2 exercises found in Chapter 7, Habit #4, (p.109-112) and pick 3 from Appendix 4 to practice as well.
- Review “Fun with Friends” exercise in Appendix 4 (p.137) for next week.

# Session 6: Closing – Where We Go From Here

## Preparing for the Meeting

- Email a reminder to review the “Fun with Friends” exercise in Appendix 4 (p.137), and ask couples to bring their “Joy Assessment” they filled out the first week.
- Watch the **Facilitator** and **Teaching Video** for week 6.
- **Print copies of the Joy Assessment** and bring to this week’s meeting.
- Have some **music** ready to play during the exercise.

## SAMPLE SCHEDULE

### 7:00-7:05p 🕒 (5 min) – Welcome

Give a warm welcome to the group. Ask if anyone has an encouraging report to share from this past week!

### 7:05-7:10p 🕒 (5 min) – Review from Last Week

Check and see if anyone has input or questions from what was covered last week (the teaching and exercise). Ask how practicing the 5 exercises assigned last week from Ch.7 and Appendix 4 went. Which one(s) went well? Were fun? Any questions?

### 7:10-7:34p 🕒 (24 min) – Play Session 5 Video

### 7:34-7:55p 🕒 (21 min) – 2-3 Discussion Questions

- What stood out to you from this video?
- What is one impacting thing you’ve learned through this small group?
- What are some ways you’ve seen yourself grow or change this past 5 weeks?

### 7:55-8:17p 🕒 (22 min): Joy Assessment & Preparing for ‘Fun with Friends’ Exercise

Here you’ll invite couples re-take the Joy Assessment they took in Week 1, and help them prepare for the *Fun with Friends* exercise (from Appendix 4, pg. 137). ‘Fun with Friends’ is an opportunity to go on a date with another couple and share joy! Tonight will walk through part of this exercise as a way to prepare for the double-date they’ll set up later!

**Note:** Playing some calming music during this time can be helpful.

**Step 1: Joy Assessment 🕒 (5 min)** – Have each person fill out the Joy Assessment. When finished, each person can compare results with the assessment they took in Week 1, then discuss their find-

ings and observations with their spouse.

**Step 2: Read over 'Fun with Friends' (p.137).** 🕒 (2 min) – Have each couple read over the 'Fun with Friends' exercise to see what their last homework assignment is.

**Step 3: Discuss Question #1 from 'Fun with Friends' (p.137)** 🕒 (5 min) – Have couples highlight the effect of what they've learned and practiced this past 5 weeks on their marriage. E.g., "What are your favorite exercises from the book? How would you describe how these were helpful to you?"

**Step 4: Practice Appreciation (Q. #2 from 'Fun with Friends')** 🕒 (5 min) - Have couples alternate sharing the following:

- Three highlights from your week
- Three qualities you enjoy about your spouse
- (If there is time...) Three characteristics you appreciate in the other couple (If they are not sure who they'll invite on the double-date, they can pick one couple they might invite)
- Share what you notice after practicing this appreciation exercise

**Step 5: Next Steps** 🕒 (3 min) - Ask couples to close with some discussion on how they can take what they have learned from this study and continue to apply it to their marriage. What might some next steps be?

**Step 6: Coast to Quiet** 🕒 (2 min) - Ask couples to get comfortable and cuddle, taking just a few minutes to quiet and rest together.

### 8:17-8:22p 🕒 (5 min): Exercise Debrief

- How did this exercise go?
- What are some ways you can keep the joy momentum growing in your marriage?

### 8:22-8:30p 🕒 (8 min): Wrap Up & Next Steps

- Make sure you save time before the meeting ends to thank couples for being part of the group and congratulate them on the work they've done to build joy in their marriage. This is worth celebrating!
- Encourage couples to reach out to another couple *this week* and set up a double date to complete the 'Fun with Friends' exercise (p. 137).
- Discuss some possible ways couples can keep momentum going. E.g., some may want to invite other couples to go through a 6-week study with them.
- Encourage couples to schedule time each night this week to practice their favorite exercises from the book (maybe alternate who chooses each night). What would happen if everyone practiced 15 minutes of shared joy for the next 30 days? 😊

# NOTES



[HappyHappyMarriage.org](http://HappyHappyMarriage.org)