



By: James J Messina, Ph.D., CCMHC, NCC, DCMHS

Chapter 1: Marital Health Checkup

MWO 1 Roster

- 1-1: Marital Status Inventory
- 1-2: Key Marital Behavioral Issues Inventory
- 1-3: Marital Symptom Checklist
- 1-4 What's Bothering Us Recording Form
- 1-5: Marriage Work-out Plan of Action

Prologue

...The Durites went to a marriage counselor last year. Joshua was restless in the marriage. He was feeling like there was something missing. Lois was complacent. She had put in seventeen years of herself in this marriage and accepted it as it was. The counselor gave them a mental health checkup. Their results were abysmal. Their marriage was very sick and in need of immediate care. But Joshua and Lois ignored the caution signs and never returned to the counselor's office for further work ...

Will you be like Joshua and Lois? If you find your marriage has signs of disease will you ignore them or will you do something about it? This first chapter contains four different assessment devices to assess the health of your relationship. Work on each one individually and complete the follow-up activity if one is given. Check your vital signs and give heed to any warning signals. If however you have a problem and get stuck on an exercise, let it go awhile and proceed on with the others. Return to the problem activity later, once you two have experienced some successful communication. The action plan at the end of this section will help you develop a plan for your **Marriage Work-Out**.

1-1: Marital Status Inventory

Fill out and score this inventory on your own, then share your results with your partner. Read the following forty statements concerning the status of your married life. Read each statement and then rate your marriage as it is right now. Use the following rating scale:

1 = Never True 2 = Rarely True 3 = Frequently True
4 = Almost Always True 5 = Always True

- _____ 1. We enjoy the same interests.
- _____ 2. We feel comfortable about allowing each other time with our own specific individual friends.
- _____ 3. We are in agreement about our goals and ambitions.
- _____ 4. We are content with what each expects of the other in our marriage.
- _____ 5. We are satisfied with each other as marital partners.
- _____ 6. We freely chose the number of children that we have (or want) in our marriage
- _____ 7. We agree with each other about the methods of disciplining children.
- _____ 8. We feel that the other is or will be a good parent.
- _____ 9. We agree on basic religious and moral values in terms of raising children
- _____ 10. We have no conflict with the teachings of our religion(s) in terms of its impact on our married life.
- _____ 11. We are in agreement concerning our religious beliefs.
- _____ 12. Physical or mental health ills do not cause problems between us.
- _____ 13. We accept the way each other handles personal problems.
- _____ 14. We have no concerns about how each other handles anger, frustration and controls temper
- _____ 15. We compromise when discussing issues of conflict
- _____ 16. We have no concern about each other's moodiness.
- _____ 17. Neither of us experiences depression.

- _____ 18. We are not dependent on either set of our parents.
- _____ 19. We are both most alert at the same time of the day.
- _____ 20. We are not possessive of one another
- _____ 21. We are good companions in doing things together.
- _____ 22. We find that we are at ease with each other.
- _____ 23. We are able to talk with one another on an honest and open level
- _____ 24. We know how to fight fairly.
- _____ 25. We are able to express our feelings openly with each other.
- _____ 26. We work hard on our communication with each other.
- _____ 27. We handle disagreements with each other in a loving way.
- _____ 28. We are satisfied with the way in which we resolve our difficulties.
- _____ 29. When we have offended one or the other, we talk it out.
- _____ 30. We avoid doing any hurtful things to each other when we get angry.
- _____ 31. We are not afraid of each other.
- _____ 32. We do not feel pressure to stay in this Marriage
- _____ 33. We have no concerns about each other's ability to handle money.
- _____ 34. We have enough income to cover our expenses.
- _____ 35. We are in agreement about how we handle our savings, debts, and budget.
- _____ 36. We have no concern about our in-laws causing friction for us.
- _____ 37. We have no pressure from either of our families concerning our current partner.
- _____ 38. Neither of us is concerned about being sexually impotent or frigid.
- _____ 39. We are content about the ways in which we show affection to one another

_____40. We are growing together in our married life to a full and rich sexual relationship

_____ **My Score**

_____ **My Spouse's Score**

_____ **Our Average Couple Score**

To score this inventory: Add up the values of the 40 ratings to come up with your total score. Put your score and your partner's score in the appropriate blank. To arrive at your couple score, add both your spouse's and your score together, then divide by two. Round the average to the next whole number. The following is the Interpretation of the scores on this inventory.

| Score | Rating | Interpretation |
|--------------|---------------------|--|
| 200-180 | Close to Perfection | Congratulations to both. It appears that you have a lot going in your marriage. You should be able to breeze your way through this Marriage Work-out . |
| 179-160 | Superior | Keep up the good work. You have a real workable relationship. However, keep your guard up. Don't get lazy or overconfident. This Marriage Work-Out will be a good refresher course for you both. |
| 159-140 | Outstanding | You both have some good things going for you, but you definitely need a Marriage Work-Out to enrich and fortify your relationship. You might be getting too flabby about the midline or a little sloppy in your delivery. Get your sweat suits on for a long run. |
| 139-120 | Good | You both may need an exercise and nutrition program to regain your marital health. This Marriage Work-Out is for you. |
| 119 or below | Fair | Your marriage may be suffering from lack of nurturing and healthy exercise. Congratulations on your decision to use Marriage Work-out for the purpose of marital nourishment and exercise. Use these exercises to give your marriage a new health and vitality. You two may need marital counseling and support during this time. If so bring your books with you to such sessions. |

The inventories and check lists in **Marriage Work-out** are not **tests**. These inventories and checklists are discussion tools. Each item on them can stand alone as a topic for couple consideration and communication. Use these assessment tools as guidelines for

couple discussion. Please do not get hung up on your **scores**. The ratings of the scores is skewed in the direction of stating the ideal conditions for mutual growth of love in a marriage. These are ideals that we strive for throughout our married lives. To reach a full ideal is perfection. As humans we will be very blessed if we are able to achieve some degree of the ideal. Do not be hard on yourselves or discouraged if your scores on these exercises are frequently low. Use these exercises as self-assessment gauges of the areas where you both need to work harder in order to assist your **Marriage Work-out**.

To further assist you to plan your **Marriage Work--Out**, review your partner's and your individual responses on this evaluation, then refer to the sections of this book which will give you two some exercises to address the issues where your differences exist.

| Inventory Item | Topic | Pertinent Chapters of Marriage Work-out |
|--|-----------------------------|--|
| 1,2 | Interest & Activities | 6,8,10 |
| 3,4,5 | Role in Marriage | 3,4,5,6,7,11 |
| 6,7,8,9 | Children | 2,6,9,11 |
| 9,10,11 | Religion &Philosophy | 5,6,7,8,9,11 |
| 12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19 | Personal Adjustment | 2,3,4,5,6,7,9 |
| 20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32 | Interpersonal Communication | 2,3,4,5,6,7,11 |
| 33,34,35 | Financial | 7,8,9 |
| 36,37 | In-Laws & Parents of Couple | 2,3,4,5,7,11 |
| 38,39,40 | Sexuality | 2,3,4,5,7,9 |

In Your Journal Put in Personal Notes on this Exercise

1-2: Key Marital Behavioral Issues Inventory

Now that you have begun to assess the health of your marriage here is an exercise in which you will look at seven specific areas which contribute to marital health. Once you have completed and scored this activity, you will proceed on to a planning activity in which you and your partner will identify specific behaviors needing to be changed in your relationship to restore it to improved health. Do this exercise individually first. Once you complete the inventory and score it, compare your score with your partner. Then jointly work-out the behavioral change plan. Circle **Yes** if the statement is true in your marriage and circle **No** if it is not true for you

I. Keeping the Marriage Interesting:

Yes No [1] Do I currently give special little gifts to my partner?

Yes No [2] Do I frequently and spontaneously suggest or do an interesting activity with my partner?

Yes No [3] Do I frequently enjoy doing little simple things with my partner?

Yes No [4] Do I plan a special night or meal for no apparent reason?

Yes No [5] Do I still do with my partner, the activities we initially did when we were dating or first married?

Yes No [6] Do I frequently have interesting and stimulating conversations with my partner?

II. Trying New Things with My Partner:

Yes No [7] Have we tried a new hobby which interests us both and which neither of us had mastered before we got married?

Yes No [8] Have we made new friends as a couple with people that neither of us knew before we married?

Yes No [9] Have we recently gone to an opera, movie, play, museum or other entertainment activity which neither of us had ever gone to before we married?

Yes No [10] Have we explored new places of interest that neither of us had been to before we married?

Yes No [11] Have we tried different routines or schedules during the week or on weekends to avoid monotony or getting into a rut?

Yes No [12] Have we unexpectedly suggested a change of plans which involves our time with others so that we can spend that time alone with each other in a fun and carefree alternative way?

III. Recognizing and Accepting Differences in My Partner

Yes No [13] Do I believe that although we have differences that our love can still be good and fulfilling?

Yes No [14] Do I believe that we do not have to have the same interests and do all outside activities together?

Yes No [15] Do I respect the differences in my partner and not insist that my partner be just like me or to see things the way I do?

Yes No [16] Do I see the differences we have as opportunities for growth in our marriage?

Yes No [17] Do I encourage discussions in which our differences are openly admitted and dealt with in a constructive manner?

Yes No [18] Do I encourage my partner to pursue independent interests or activities and to maintain a free and independent point of view from mine?

IV. Maintaining a Balance in our Relationship

Yes No [19] Do we maintain a balance of the "giver" and "receiver" roles in our relationship?

Yes No [20] Do each of us resist taking a "my way all the time" attitude?

Yes No [21] Do I look forward to my chance to be the "giver" in our relationship?

Yes No [22] Do I encourage my partner to stand up and make demands of me?

Yes No [23] Am I assertive enough with my partner?

Yes No [24] Do I insist on my partner not giving into me just to stop an argument?

V. Recognizing the Marriage is an Ongoing and Changing Process

Yes No [25] Do I make an attempt to treat and react to my partner in ways different from what I did when we first married?

Yes No [26] Am I flexible enough to address my partner's changing needs, interests or responsibilities?

Yes No [27] Do I encourage things being different from when we dated and first married?

Yes No [28] Do I spend the time with my partner to periodically re-examine the goals and priorities we have in our marriage?

Yes No [29] Are my expectations for our marriage different from those when we first married?

Yes No [30] Are my partner and I growing in this marriage so that we can each avoid stagnating or regressing?

VI. Listening to One Another

Yes No [31] Do I spend enough time talking openly and honestly with my partner?

Yes No [32] Do my partner and I set aside regularly scheduled times to share emotional intimacy?

Yes No [33] Do I trust my partner enough to go out on the limb and open myself up personally in our discussions?

Yes No [34] Do my partner and I take turns when we talk so that each person gets a chance to speak and be heard?

Yes No [35] Do I pursue discussions without the fear that they will end up in fights.

Yes No [36] Do I find it easy to communicate with my partner about my inner concerns, fears, wishes, dreams, fantasies, expectations, insecurities and desires?

VII. Knowing and Accepting Myself as I am

Yes No [37] Am I a strong and secure person in this marriage?

Yes No [38] Do I recognize my personal strengths and weaknesses which I currently bring to this marriage?

Yes No [39] Do I fully accept myself for who I am?

Yes No [40] Do I freely accept and act on the constructive criticism and suggestions from my partner?

Yes No [41] Do I freely let my partner know who I really am?

Yes No [42] Am I always open and non-defensive in this marriage?

My Score: _____

My Partner's Score: _____

Our Couple Average Score: _____

To score this **Key Marital Behavioral Issues Inventory**, add up all of the YES responses. To get the couple score, average your score with your partner's and round it up, if needed, to the next whole number. The following is the interpretation of the scores on this inventory.

| Score | Ratings | Interpretation |
|--------------|--------------------|--|
| 42-39 | Near to Perfection | Your relationship is very healthy. You two have been working-out for a long time. It takes a lot of effort, energy and giving. Your love is its own reward. See you on the exercise trail. |
| 38-36 | Superior | Your relationship's health is fine. You two have probably just begun to work-out. Use Marriage Workout to help you to expand your repertoire of exercises. It takes a lot of sweat and tears to keep in shape, but you guys have the potential. |
| 35-33 | Outstanding | Your relationship's health is good. You two have probably not taken any steps to work-out to this point. You may not be comfortable with the idea of taking the time out of your busy schedules to exercise, but yet you get a sense that if you don't, your marital health might slip. Well you have come to the right place, and we hope you will stick to the |

| | | |
|------------|------|--|
| | | exercise routine outlined in Marriage Workout |
| 32-30 | Good | Your relationship's health is adequate. You two may be out of shape and need some real firming up. You may be very hesitant to take the time and effort to shore up what looks to you like a time demanding proposition. Take heart! With commitment, a willingness to try and a degree of optimism, you can use Marriage Workout to enrich the health of your relationship. |
| 29 & below | Fair | Your relationship's health is in need of help. Neither of you has been nurturing or exercising it well. You two need to provide your relationship with a transfusion of time, energy, creativity and effort. Marriage Workout is only a way to health by exercise. It is no instant cure. Only you two can restore health to your relationship. So, doctors, "Heal thyselfes!" |

Once you have reviewed your scores, look at each of the seven areas of the inventory and mutually discuss areas where you both need to exercise. Then prepare a Behavioral Change Plan for your workout by listing those new or different behaviors you can try to improve in each area.

Our Work-Out Behavioral Change Plan

We agree we need to do the following new and different behaviors to improve our relationship.

I. Keeping the Marriage Interesting:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

II. Trying New Things with My Partner:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

III. Recognizing and Accepting Differences in My Partner

- 1.

- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

IV. Maintaining a Balance in our Relationship

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

V. Recognizing the Marriage is an Ongoing and Changing Process

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

VI. Listening to One Another

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

VII. Knowing and Accepting Myself as I am

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

We both agree that we will try these new and different behaviors as we work on the exercises in our Marriage Workout. We will make an effort to stick to this plan and alter it as new areas for improvement arise.

My Signature

My Spouse's Signature

Date:

Date:

1-3: Marital Symptom Checklist

Professional Marriage Counselors and Mental Health Professionals have identified the following twenty symptoms as being most indicative of stress in marriages. These symptoms are used to get the couple's pulse rate and temperature. It is a quick way to get an overview of your couple health. It is a third way to check on your relationship. It is offered here to give you both increased feedback so you can better plan your Marriage Work-Out. Each of you should do this independently first, Read each symptom and circle **T** if it is true or **F** if it is not true in your marriage. Once you have completed this checklist, compare your results with your partner's.

- T F (1) I find my partner less attractive or desirable than I did at the beginning of our relationship.
- T F (2) I have started noticing attractive members of the opposite sex - friends, neighbors or co-workers, and I have been having romantic fantasies about these people.
- T F (3) When I hear of friends, relatives or co-workers getting a divorce or separating, I wonder if I should be taking such steps.
- T F (4) I do not communicate as freely with my spouse as I did in the past.
- T F (5) I no longer enjoy doing everyday things with my partner, like taking a walk or doing the household chores together.
- T F (6) I often get bored with my partner.
- T F (7) I often get impatient or angry at my partner.
- T F (8) My partner and I are keeping each other at arm's length emotionally.
- T F (9) We often argue over money matters, child rearing and/or other topics
- T F (10) I am and/or my partner is currently involved in an extra-marital affair.
- T F (11) I feel unappreciated in this relationship
- T F (12) I am resentful of my partner's lack of appreciation, attention and caring.
- T F (13) I have lost my personal identity in this marriage
- T F (14) My only interests are my partner and his/her interests
- T F (15) I blame only my partner for the problems in our relationship
- T F (16) My partner blames only me for the problems in our relationship
- T F (17) I avoid using the word "we" in speaking of anything relating to our relationship
- T F (18) I do not feel like our relationship is a "sharing" one, in terms of sharing possessions, time and privacy.
- T F (19) My partner and I have conflicting ideas on practically everything
- T F (20) My partner and I do not agree on one another's viewpoint in terms of goals or philosophy of life

_____ **My Score**

_____ **My Spouse's Score**

_____ **Our Average Couple Score**

To score this Marital Symptom Checklist add up only the true statements and put that number down for your score. To get your couple score, add up all true statements on both of your checklists. Count a symptom only once if you both marked it true. The following is an interpretation of the Symptoms Checklist:

| Number of Symptoms Marked True | Interpretation |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1-2 | Almost everyone can answer true to one or two, but rectify the problems identified. This Workout should be a joy to pursue. |
| 3-5 | You may be heading for trouble. Don't take your relationship for granted. You and your partner should work on whatever symptoms have been revealed. You two really need this Workout. |
| 6 or more | You should attempt to discuss your symptoms with your partner calmly and reasonably. Problem resolution is needed badly to get your full health restored. Use this Workout in a concerted effort to shape up your relationship. |

Personal Notes on this Exercise

1-4 What's Bothering Us Recording Form

The following are 20 common complaints or concerns which couples who have not been working on their relationships have reported as bothersome. Read each statement, and then check it under "Bothering me" column only if this is a concern of yours. If you believe this is a concern of your partner's then check it under "Bothers partner" column, Do this exercise independently from your partner, Compare your results with your partner once you have scored your recording form, then proceed to complete the **What's Bothering Us Plan**.

| Bothers me | Bothers Partner | Bothersome Complaint or Concern |
|------------|-----------------|--|
| | | (1) I feel a great deal of sadness in our marriage |
| | | (2) I find a lessening of my capacity for wonderment about my spouse. |
| | | (3) I experience feelings of disillusionment, boredom, emptiness and loneliness in our relationship |
| | | (4) I find that I am continuously escaping into such things as TV, sports, socializing, social media, alcohol, drugs, etc. |
| | | (5) I experience occasions of coolness coming towards me from my spouse |
| | | (6) I experience insults, rudeness, sarcasm and excessive criticism from my partner |
| | | (7) I feel that there is not enough affection or small courtesies given me by my spouse. |
| | | (8) I find that we have frequent quarrels or fights which end unresolved. |
| | | (9) I experience insecurity and/or jealousy in this relationship. |
| | | (10) I find a lack of excitement in our relationship. |
| | | (11) I find that I am better understood by others than by my spouse |
| | | (12) I find that I have been taken for granted by my spouse |
| | | (13) I find that I am often being nagged by my spouse |
| | | (14) I find that I am often being taken advantage of by my spouse |
| | | (15) I find that I am rarely able to plan things together with my spouse |
| | | (16) I feel my spouse is more interested in position and |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | | money than in me |
| | | (17) I find that I do not get enough personal conversation with my spouse and that most of our communication is mechanical, routine and on the surface |
| | | (18) I find that my spouse never does activities with me |
| | | (19) I find that my spouse shows indifference to my problems, interests, job, etc... |
| | | (20) I feel like I have been used in this relationship |

Once you have completed recording what bothers you and what you feel bothers your spouse in your marriage, then review your list with your partner. Listen to each other carefully as you review each of the twenty items. Revise your recording form based on the feedback you have received from your spouse. You now have a permanent record of the complaints and concerns which bother both of you in your marriage. With your recording forms complete, now prepare the **What's Bothering Us Plan**.

What's Bothering Us Plan

1. Giving my Partner a Chance: I will give my partner a chance as we work out. I will attempt to not mention the following complaints or concerns during our workout sessions unless the exercise calls for it. What I'll try to keep a lid on are the following complaints:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

2. Giving myself a Chance: I will give myself a chance as we work out. I will try to change those behaviors which bother my partner in this marriage, I will make every attempt to alter these bothersome behaviors in the hope that by working-out my partner and I will be able to restore a greater degree of health and happiness to our relationship. I will work on changing the following behaviors:

- 1.

- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

I agree to give my partner and myself a chance to make this Marriage Work-Out work.

My Signature

My Spouse's Signature

Date:

Date:

1-5: Marriage Work-out Plan of Action

Having completed all four assessment exercises in this chapter, the following are our work-out plans:

1. We as a couple need to spend more time discussing the following topics (List them here):

2. To better address these topics we are going to use the following chapters of this book (put a ranking number only on those you intend to use) in the order of importance indicated by their ranking:

| Rank in Order of Importance | Chapter | Topic |
|-----------------------------|---------|-----------------------|
| | 2 | Communications |
| | 3 | Assertiveness |
| | 4 | Conflict Resolution |
| | 5 | Personal Functioning |
| | 6 | Values |
| | 7 | Marital Burnout |
| | 8 | Time Management |
| | 9 | Sexuality |
| | 10 | Finances |
| | 11 | Families and Children |

3. We are planning to adhere to the following schedule and plan to accomplish our Marriage Work-Out exercises:

A. We will spend ___ minutes each day on these Marriage Work-Out exercises. (It is recommended thirty minutes each day)

B. Our appointed times are: From: _____ To: _____

C. We will meet in the _____ (list room/place)

D. We will make the following special arrangements to ensure our Work-Out times are private and productive:

- Telephone
- Kids
- Pets

- Friends
- Relatives
- Workload
- House work
- TV
- Computer
- Radio/Music

E. We will:

- Sit in comfortable chairs or at a table when we meet. We will face each other eye to eye when we talk,
- We will quietly do the written part of the exercises on our own at another time usually.
- We will maintain an atmosphere of loving respect, caring and understanding during each exercise session.
- We will not look at each other's book unless our partner gives us permission.
- We will keep all notes and records of these exercises in our note books.
- We will agree to disagree when the exercises call for it. We will monitor ourselves to be sure we don't slacken off or slough off our work-out times.

We agree to this Marriage Work-Out Plan:

My Signature

My Spouse's Signature

Date:

Date:

Good Luck! Now Work-Out!